Marxism Today

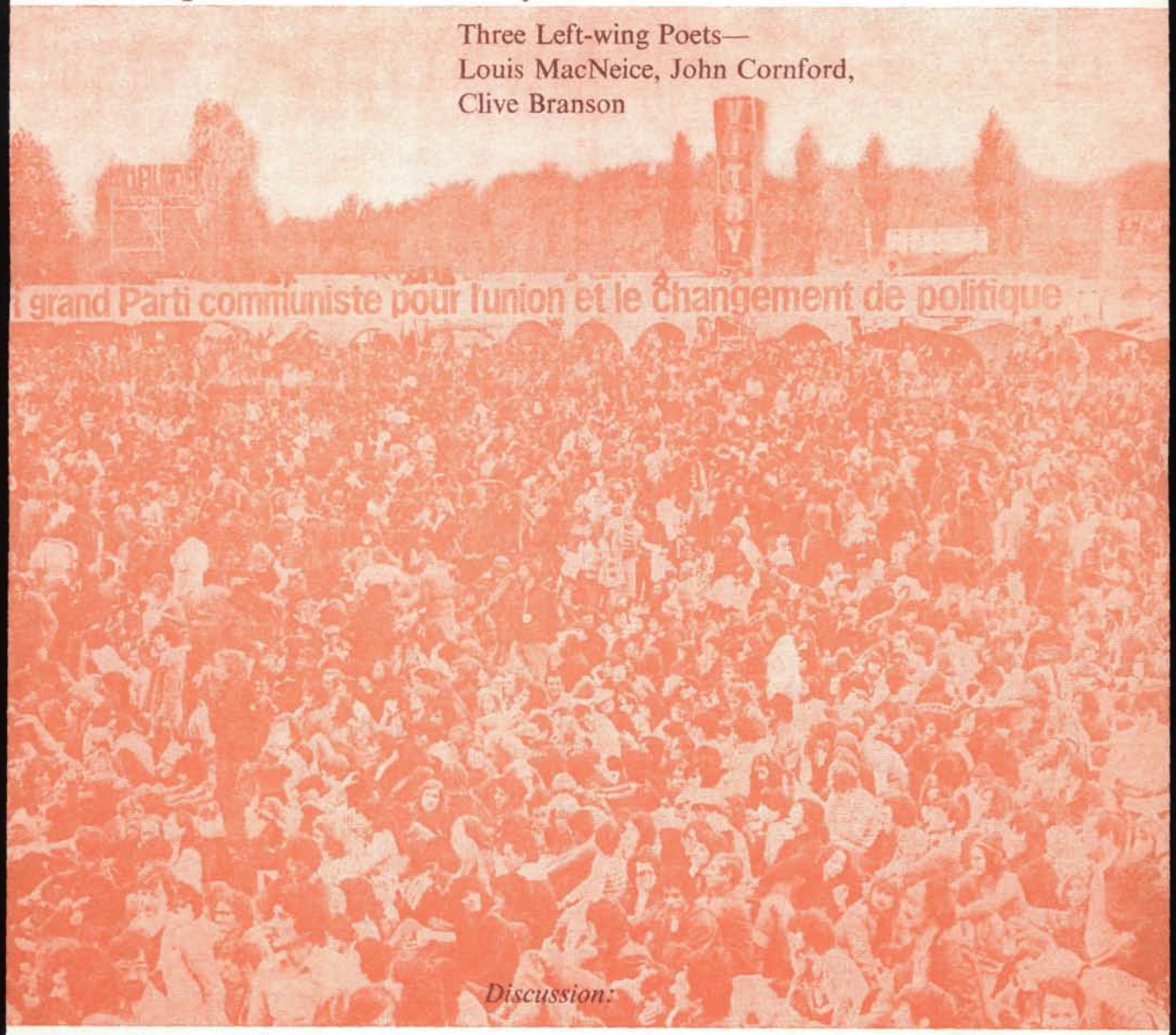
Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party November 1976 30 pence

Editorial Comments

Jack Woddis **The State—Some Problems**

Margot Heinemann **Poetry of the Thirties:**

Three Left-wing Poets—
Louis MacNeice, John Cornford,
Clive Branson



Discussion:

George Bridges
Reuben Falber
Bill Tait

Socialist Democracy—Some Problems

The background photograph is of the Humanité Fête, September 1976

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party

Volume 20, Number 11

Editor James Klugmann

Editorial Board

Irene Brennan/Gabriel Carritt/Jack Cohen
John Foster/John Gollan/Alan Hunt
Arnold Kettle/Betty Matthews
Tony McLelland/Bert Pearce/Dave Priscott
Mike Seifert/Sue Slipman/George Wake
Nick Wright/Dave Wynn

Editorial Correspondence
James Klugmann, 16 King Street, WC2E 8HY

Advertisements
Doris Allison, above address

Orders and Subscriptions
Usual Agents or Central Books Ltd., 37 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8PS

Subscription Rates
£4.15 per annum UK and Eire
£4.27 per annum Abroad

CONTENTS

	Editorial Comments	**329**
Jack Woddis	Questions of the State: **The State—Some Problems**	**331**
Margot Heinemann	Poetry of the Thirties: **Three Left-wing Poets—Louis MacNeice; John Cornford; Clive Branson**	**343**
Discussion: **George Bridges, Reuben Falber, Bill Tait**	**Socialist Democracy—Some Problems**	**355**

The front cover was designed by Pat Cook

SOME ARTICLES PLANNED FOR FORTHCOMING ISSUES

Louis Althusser	Lysenko: Unfinished History
Yuri Andropov	Leninism: Science and Art of Revolutionary Creative Effort
Etienne Balibar	The Dictatorship of the Proletariat
Doug Bourn	Problems of Marxist History
Paul Corrigan	Marxism and the Welfare State
Andrew Ferns	Spain Today, Glasgow Tomorrow
Tetsuzo Fuwa	Scientific Socialism and the Question of Dictatorship
James Harvey	Theories of Inflation
James Klugmann	Marxism and Reformism
John Milner	Lewis Grassic Gibbon's 'Scots Quair'
Gian Carlo Pajetta	For Socialism in Europe
Geoff Roberts	The Politics of Rank-and-Filism
Lucien Sève	The Leninist Development of the Strategy of Peaceful Revolution
Peter Smith	North Sea Oil
Julian Tudor Hart	The British Working Class and the Medical Profession
Gordon Wardman	Social Work: a Communist View
Charles Woolfson	Culture, Language and Propaganda
John Hoffman and Richard Gunn	A Debate on the Dialectics of Nature

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Editorial Comments

THE Labour Research Department has once again provided the whole movement with invaluable information for use in the struggle against the big monopolies and against Right-Wing labour policies which seek to solve the present crisis at the expense of the ordinary working people.

The September issue of *Labour Research*[1] examines the role played by British multi-nationals in our economic life and, on the basis of carefully authenticated facts, shows that "the interests of British multi-nationals are in conflict with the national needs for exports and investments."

This is confirmed by the following details: 30 leading British multi-nationals produced goods at home worth £18,000 million in 1975/6 of which £3,470 million were exported. Their overseas production was £16,280 million or 90 per cent of their home production and it was 4½ times greater than their exports from the UK. Since profits are broadly in proportion to sales, these 30 companies made 4½ times more profit from their overseas production than from their exports from Britain.

Further, there are nine British multi-nationals producing more abroad than at home and eight more whose overseas output was between 50 per cent and 100 per cent of their home output. The impulse for this is, as might be guessed, again more profits. "The profits made at home by industrial and commercial companies in 1974 were 2.3 times as high as in 1964, but their profits made abroad were 5.4 times as high."

Investment, the need for which in Britain is emphasised on every hand and the encouragement of which is said to be behind the Government's cuts policy, finds no echo in the policies of the multi-nationals. Reed International, the giant paper concern which owns the *Daily Mirror* along with other papers, certainly goes in for investment—but not primarily in Britain. The article quotes the following from its report on its new capital investment programme 1975-76:

> "We continued to invest in new plant, equipment and factories . . . such as . . . the Dryden Mill in Canada, completing a new pulp and paper mill in South Africa, a new mill near Toronto and introducing new technology into Mirror Group newspapers".

Metal Box invested £15 million abroad compared with £14 million here. Associated Portland Cement invested £13 million abroad in 1976 compared with £10 million here. British multi-nationals as a whole stepped up their overseas investment in 1973. From an average of £600 million in 1970-72, it rose to £1,600 million in 1973 and again in 1974, declining to £1,100 million in 1975 at the time of the world slump, which recovered to an annual rate of nearly £1,500 million in the first quarter of 1976.

At the end of 1975, the total value of overseas investments by all British companies, other than oil, insurance and banking companies, was £12,860 million. The great part of this overseas investment belongs to a small number of very large multi-national companies. At the end of 1971 nearly two-thirds of the overseas assets of British companies (other than oil companies) was owned by 65 companies and nearly three-quarters by 108.

Fifty companies were responsible for nearly half (47.4%) of British exports in 1974 but another 194 companies were responsible for only 29 per cent.

These big multi-national companies—not the living standards of the British workers—are thus shown to play a prime role in Britain's economic difficulties.

FESTIVALS OF THE PEOPLE

The traditional fete of *l'Humanité* was held on the week-end of September 11-12 in the Park of La Courneuve. A week-end later, on Saturday-Sunday, September 18-19, the Festival of *Unità* was held in Naples, the first to be held in Southern Italy.

Both were attended by enormous crowds—old and young, communist, socialist, radical, progressive, christian and humanist—expressions of the broad unity of the people. Both had the support of leading figures of culture and sport. Both were attended by

[1] *Labour Research*, 25p available from progressive bookshops or directly from LRD, 70 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HI.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

delegations of the workers' and people's press from all over the world. Both—held at moments of great political tension and decision—revealed tremendous support for the Communist Party.

The French Communist Party had adopted a target of winning 80,000 new members between January 1—September 12, 1976. This was achieved with 6,000 of these new recruits being made during the Fete of *Humanité* (in itself a record). There was confidence that by the end of 1976 the figure of new recruits would have risen to 100,000.

Renzo Trivelli, discussing the Unità Festival (*Unità* September 25, 1976), saw it as a cultural-political symbol of the presence of the Communist Party in contrast to the growing trends of isolation and individualism of modern life—"an illustration and an enrichment, by way of debate and confrontation, of the Party's policy and strategy in the widest sense of the word".

The Festival, he wrote, as a multiform creation of the popular masses revealed features of our Party that are today more than ever essential—that it is "a Party that is not closed nor a 'vanguard' separated from class and people".

SPECIAL CONFERENCE OF COMMUNIST PARTY OF JAPAN

The normal Party Congress of the Communist Party of Japan, planned for the autumn of this year, has been postponed until 1977, and in its place the 13th Extraordinary Conference was held at the end of July.

Its main tasks were to discuss certain theoretical questions and in the light of this discussion to make partial amendments to the Party Programme and Constitution, to adopt a "Manifesto of Freedom and Democracy", to examine the crisis of the Liberal-Democratic (ruling) Party which had deepened with the collapse of the Tanaka Cabinet and the exposure of the Lockheed scandal, and to prepare the next General Election.

By the time of the Conference the Japanese Communist Party had risen to a membership of over 380,000 with more than 3 million readers of *Akahata*, the daily paper of the Party.

We shall return to the decisions of this Conference, in particular to the "Manifesto on Freedom and Democracy" and to the theoretical discussions.

SOCIAL EVOLUTION AND SOCIOLOGICAL CATEGORIES

Paul Q. Hirst "Social Evolution and Sociological Categories", George Allen & Unwin, 1976.

Paul Hirst launches a severe, but often difficult, criticism against 'teleology'. The object of his attack are all views which explain social relations or social development as the product of, or as the realisation of, some general purpose or motive of the historical process. He directs his offensive in two long essays against two apparently unconnected but famous social theorists. First, he criticises Herbert Spencer's view that 'progress' in the form of change from the simple to the complex, is the underlying motive force of history. Second, he provides a very incisive attack upon the most influential of all bourgeois sociologists, Max Weber. He finds Weber guilty of teleology, albeit in a less obvious form than in Spencer's work. Weber's subjectivist view of social action amounts to making the will of the human subject the purposive thread. In the course of his discussion of Weber he provides what is one of the best available general critiques of the major elements of his sociology, and especially of his use of 'ideal types' in the classification of social phenomena.

In 'Social Evolution and Sociological Categories' (George Allen & Unwin, 1976, £2.25) Paul Hirst's attack is not simply directed against bourgeois sociology. He makes it clear that Marxists are often guilty of lapsing into teleological explanations. This argument, against what he calls 'historicist Marxism', carries forward the discussion of his earlier book with Barry Hindess.[2]

What is not made sufficiently clear is why teleology, whether in bourgeois sociology or in Marxism, is such a major heresy as Paul Hirst clearly believes it to be; and it is this failure that makes the political and theoretical purpose of his latest book less than clear.

In "Marxism Today" December Issue

Geoff Roberts—The Politics of Rank-and-Filism

Peter Smith—North Sea Oil and Gas—its Past and its Future

[2] 'Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production', Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Questions of the State:

The State—Some Problems

Jack Woddis

(*The author is a member of the Political Committee of the Communist Party and Head of the International Department*)

It is not my intention here to restate general Marxist propositions regarding the State, although I will need, in the course of my examination of some problems in this field, to refer to certain main ideas which are commonly regarded as embodying the Marxist approach to the State. There are four main problems which I would like to consider. They are:

(a) What is political power?
(b) The relation of coercion to consent, and their utilisation in advanced capitalist countries.
(c) How valid is the formulation that the State is an apparatus of class rule, an instrument for maintaining class domination?
(d) How do we view today the proposition concerning the necessity to "smash the state" in order to end the capitalist system?

In selecting these four problems for examination I do not intend, in any way, to imply that these are necessarily the main problems that a revolutionary movement must consider in relation to the State. For those working in capitalist countries, especially in developed ones such as Britain, the main task is to win understanding that the State is a key institution by which the big monopolies maintain their political power, and consequently their economic domination. This understanding is absolutely vital for the British labour movement. Its failure to grasp this, and to act accordingly, is the Achilles heel of our movement.

Years of propaganda by the ruling class, the mass media, the various institutions for conveying ideas, including our educational system, and the views expounded by right-wing labour and trade union leaders and by reformists generally, have deceived the majority of working people into accepting the idea that the State is an impartial institution, standing above the class struggle. Consequently our working class still limits its political activity, in the main, to voting in elections, not seeing that, in addition to securing a Parliament and Government that will respond to its aspirations, it is essential to achieve a qualitatively new State, one that is no longer dominated by representatives of big business, but a State that is an expression of the aims and aspirations of the majority of the people, the working class and its allies. This fundamental change of political power is the key to advance from capitalism to socialism.

The four problems considered in this article in no sense exhaust all the questions that this major political task involves, but they have been selected for examination because I consider that they embrace issues which can no longer be dealt with on the basis of repeating phrases that pertain often to different times and different circumstances. Some things written here may seem controversial but I believe that it is timely to discuss them.

(a) WHAT IS POLITICAL POWER?

What is political power? What are its main pillars? Moreover, do the different instruments of political power possess permanently the same degree of importance relative to one another, or do they rather, at different phases of class conflict, become of greater or lesser significance according to the nature and stage of the conflict itself?

These questions require some prior examination if we are to comprehend the changing nature of the State in the total political system of which it is a part. Additionally, it is essential to consider these questions because, on the one hand reformists, liberals and conservatives tend to argue as if political power rested solely or almost entirely with Parliament and Government, while those of ultra-left views, on the other hand, tend to dismiss Parliament and parliamentary Government as virtually irrelevant, and to see political power in the somewhat simplified form of an armed institution ready to repress and shoot down anyone who challenges it. Lenin wrote in *Letters on Tactics*, in April, 1917:

> "As we have always known and repeatedly pointed out, the bourgeoisie maintains itself (i.e. in power: author) not only by virtue of force but also by virtue of the lack of class consciousness, the clinging to old habits, the timidity and lack of organisation of the masses."[1]

On another occasion he expressed the view that *political power is the ability to compel by force if*

[1] V. I. Lenin: *Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 35-36.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

necessary. These definitions of Lenin's certainly embrace the idea of force or coercion as an element of political power, but they go beyond this. Machiavelli argued that State political power rested on a combination of "coercion and consent".[2] Machiavelli's concept, which contains certain elements of Lenin's, was taken up by Gramsci, and has recently been drawn on by Enrico Berlinguer when discussing the lessons of the coup against the Allende Government in Chile.[3]

Taken together, these different formulations help us to understand the nature of political power. Although in each case the conception may contain a different emphasis, all of them contain a certain common kernel, namely that "force" or "coercion" or "compulsion" is an essential element of political power but that "consent" or acceptance by a substantial part of the population, even when gained by deception, is also essential.

Three Pillars of Power

Basically that power rests on the fact that the ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange (i.e. of the factories, land, shops and banks) is in the hands of private capitalists, mainly powerful ones. It is this economic basis that gives rise to the political power being in the hands of the most powerful monopolies. How does this power operate in an advanced capitalist country such as Britain?

There are three main pillars of power at the disposal of the monopoly capitalists. These three pillars are inter-related, and it is their combination that makes it possible for the ruling class to maintain its domination of our society.

First, there is power over people's minds, the power of ideas which partly by people's force of habit in their thoughts and actions, and partly by deception (which today, with the power of the mass media, has become a major weapon), wins or seduces the majority into accepting the *status quo*. It is this power which enables the rulers to gain the "consent", the acceptance, of the ruled, which is a reality even when gained by duplicity.

Secondly, there is power exercised through Parliament and Government, and through the State, which in a bourgeois-democratic country such as Britain is, constitutionally, subject to the authority of Parliament and Government. Of special significance is the power of the ruling class over the State institutions of coercion—the legal apparatus, the police, prisons and armed forces. Other parts of the State, the Ministries, Government departments, and upper echelons of the Civil Service, perform a certain supporting role in the functioning of the coercive side of the State (e.g. the immigration authorities, customs and taxation departments, etc.), but equally play a role in securing the people's acceptance of measures which are often very much against their real interests.

Thirdly, there is economic power, the private ownership of the commanding heights of the economy by the big banks, big industrial monopolies, and big landlords and property companies. This economic power naturally gives these forces the opportunity to influence the main pattern of economic policy in the country; but economic power does not exercise a purely economic function. It plays a role, too, in the exercise of coercion in the sense that pressures and sanctions (dismissals of individual militants, mass redundancies, lock-outs or threats of closure) can be used to compel workers to accept wages and conditions which probably they would otherwise not accept. (The fear of eviction can play the same role in relation to tenants and landlords.) Economic power also enables the monopolies to establish media power (commercial radio and television, films, newspapers and journals), which assist them to win the "consent" of a majority of people, aided by a combination of deception, demagogy and distortion. Economic power and the wealth derived therefrom also enables the big monopolies to establish and maintain political parties and other subsidiary political and research bodies, which again play a part in the total system of political power.

Inter-Connected

In the same way, the coercive arms of the State are themselves part of the ideological strength of the ruling class.[4] People's awareness that the army, police and the law are not really on their side, are not really at their disposal or ready to act in their defence, can become a serious inhibiting factor for many of them, a form of weakening their resistance so that they come to accept the *status quo*. On the other hand, among more conservative sections of the population uncritical acceptance of the myth of the impartiality of the State, and a consequent belief that the existing "law and order" must be maintained, renders them consenting supporters of the existing system, even to the point of becoming more ready to support a right-wing backlash.

All three pillars of power in capitalist Britain are therefore interconnected, each one reinforcing the other, and each playing an additional role beyond its own main function. Under "normal" conditions of bourgeois democracy, as in Britain, the ruling class maintains its domination of society *mainly* by

[2] Nicolo Machiavelli: *The Prince*.

[3] Enrico Berlinguer: *Reflections after the Events in Chile —Marxism Today*, February, 1974.

[4] See, for example, Alan Hunt: *Law, State and Class Struggle—Marxism Today*, June, 1976.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

its ability to persuade a majority to accept the existing system. Yet, at all times, bourgeois democracy in Britain is based on the rule of the big bourgeoisie itself, despite the democratic gains secured by the working people after centuries of struggle.

Thus, even in the outwardly most democratic systems of capitalist democracy, State power and particularly its coercive aspects are ever present to back up capitalist domination; and when the ability of the rulers to maintain the people's acceptance begins to falter, they increasingly seek to make more pronounced use of coercive measures, although whether they can use these measures or not is, of course, another matter.

(b) THE RELATION OF COERCION TO "CONSENT"

If State political power rests on a combination of coercion and "consent", with different pillars of power functioning interchangeably in each sphere, then clearly the relation of class forces at any given stage influences the extent to which greater reliance is placed by the ruling class on coercion or "consent".

In Russia, in 1917, as Gramsci has stressed, the main problem of the revolution was to overthrow the State power of a small ruling class whose domination was based mainly on repression, and where it had not been able to build up a system of firm, extensive alliances with other classes. Thus the problem was to shatter, with a violent, powerful blow, the system of coercion of an isolated, small class.

In Western Europe, however, argued Gramsci, the situation was, in the main, very different:

> "In Russia the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks: more or less numerous from one State to the next, it goes without saying—but this precisely necessitated an accurate reconnaisance of each individual country."[5]

As regards Italy, Gramsci pointed out that these "fortresses" include a strong Church (with its own schools, papers, banks, etc.) and a diversified educational and cultural system through which the ruling class provides itself with intermediate personnel who help it to maintain its power by widespread consent. As a result, the ruling class in a country such as Italy is not detached and isolated, and does not rule simply by force, but has managed to build around itself a system of alliances, including at the economic and social level, by means of concessions, welfare, and so on, and at the political and moral level, winning wide sections of intellectuals and even sections of the working class to accept a capitalist and conservative outlook.

Gramsci's main concern was to find a valid strategy for revolutionary change in Italy. This required, among other things, finding a way to win over the millions of Catholic belief. Conditions in Britain are, of course, very different. Not only do we not have any equivalent of a Christian Democrat Party, or an influence, in political terms, of religion on the scale of that in Italy; we also have a mass Labour Party, based on a united trade union organisation which now embraces 11 million wage and salary workers. Such a Party does not exist in Italy where the Socialist Party and the Social Democrat Party are both relatively small.[6] For a change to socialism to succeed in Britain, therefore, our task is somewhat different, requiring above all the winning of the majority of trade unionists for socialism and, through that process, defeating the right-wing hold in the Labour Party as well.

Need for Allies

Nevertheless, Gramsci's conception of revolutionary advance in Italy, the validity of which is being borne out by the gains of the Italian Communist Party and other left and democratic forces, is not without significance for other West European countries.

One can say that by and large the countries of Western Europe despite their variations,[7] present a fairly common pattern, with the political power of the monopoly capitalists largely depending on their being able to maintain this system of alliances, this bloc of social, political, cultural and moral forces. This whole system requires, for its continued operation, the economic possibilities to make concessions when necessary, combined with a continued ability to exercise intellectual domination. Therefore, to end the rule of monopoly capitalism in Western Europe one cannot tackle the State in isolation. The whole question of the State, its character, its transformation, its very behaviour, is closely bound up with the shifting relationship of class and political forces, with the system of alliances, with the ability or otherwise of the ruling class to continue to make concessions and maintain its intel-

[5] Antonio Gramsci—*Selections from Prison Notebooks*, London, 1971, p. 238.

[6] In the recent general elections in Italy the Socialist Party received 10.2 per cent of the votes for Parliament, and the Social Democrats 3.1 per cent, compared with 33.8 per cent for the Communist Party.

[7] We are not including any fascist State in this grouping.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lectual hold on decisive sections of the people.

If, as we have argued, the people's acceptance of the existing system is one of the pillars of political power, then the working class, if it is to challenge and defeat that power, needs to organise its own mass consent to revolutionary change. This means that it must build its own system of alliances with other classes and social strata. It must win allies away from monopoly capitalism in order to isolate and weaken it, to add forces to its own side and to prevent the ruling class using such strata for counter-revolutionary purposes. It must develop its own intellectual challenge to capitalism and secure its own intellectual leadership in society.

(c) IS THE STATE A "MACHINE"?[8]

No State power rests solely on coercion. Even the most repressive fascist State requires an ideological base, although this is founded on demagogic slogans, on extreme chauvinism, racialism, anti-semitism, and anti-communism.

In a bourgeois democratic country such as Britain, the political parties play a major role in winning the people's "consent". The Tory party represents the interests of big capital, but millions of small producers, farmers, shop-keepers, professional and technical people, and even many workers, support it and vote for it. Yet the Tory party does not act in the interests of the millions who vote for it, and this provides the possibility of the organised working class movement detaching many of these millions over to its side: and that is vital if the ruling class is to be defeated.

Apart from the capitalist parties such as the Tories and Liberals, the workers have also built up their parties, the Labour Party and the Communist Party. Within the Labour Party the right-wing leaders play an important role in the system of capitalist class rule in Britain. It has been their role over the years to confuse and divide the movement, to limit its activities, especially in the political field, to sap the confidence of the working class in its own strength and capacity to struggle, in its ability to win victories and manage society. It has persuaded the movement that it should work for reforms within the system, not to work to bring about a revolutionary change of the system itself.

Recent years, and especially the big struggles of the early 1970s, have shown that a weakening of the grip of the right-wing leaders unleashes the enormous potential power of the working class movement to such an extent that it begins to challenge the ability of the ruling class to carry on as hitherto.

Forces of Coercion

This brings us back to Lenin's formulation that political power is "the ability to compel by force if necessary". This formulation contains three essential ideas. First, that compulsion or coercion is not necessarily the permanent nor the main direct form of maintaining and exercising political power. Secondly, that the ruling class turns to the use of force when this has become necessary. Thirdly, that when faced with this necessity, the ruling class, if it is to retain its political power, has to be in a position to place its main reliance on coercion and have the means to do this.

This third point is of immense importance. The Marxist concept that the State is "a machine for the oppression of one class by another"[9] has sometimes been used in a literal, exaggerated or distorted way as though the various parts of the State, and especially the powers of coercion, are really monolithic, material instruments, ready to be picked up and used by the ruling class whenever it deems it necessary. Yet, we should remember that Engels defined the coercive departments of the State as bodies of "armed *people*"—and people are not a "machine" nor inanimate "instruments" at the ready disposal of those who may want to use them.

At the same time, of course, one should not ignore the fact that the armed forces, just like other State institutions, are not just composed of "people" in an abstract sense. The people concerned are themselves of different class composition, and with different political ties or sentiments; and the top posts are overwhelmingly in the hands of ruling class representatives, sons (and a few daughters) of rich businessmen, landowners and top professionals, educated in public schools and Oxbridge. It is these top State officials who take the decisions and so influence largely the way the State institutions operate in their normal daily affairs. The armed forces themselves have their own internal forms of "law and order", through which the officers exercise a quasi-dictatorial role; and it is the practice, in consequence, for the troops to obey the voice of

[8] Much of the argument in this section relates to what can be regarded as insurrectionary situations, which are not envisaged as the way to socialist change in Britain in the *British Road to Socialism*, nor in the strategies of most West European Communist Parties. But the *main* point being made here, namely that the armed forces (or the police) are not immutable institutions but can be influenced by the totality of political influences at work, has a validity in non-insurrectionary situations, too. After all, in the *British Road to Socialism*, the way to advance is aimed at minimising the danger of a counter-revolutionary coup; essential to stop such a threat is to influence the politics of the army, and to bring it into closer association with the strivings of the majority of the people, with the aspirations of the nation.

[9] V. I. Lenin—*The State: Speech made to Students of Sverdlov University*, July 11, 1919. *Selected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 649.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

command. But what happens under "normal" conditions in no way determines how State institutions will act under quite different circumstances, when the character and scale of class and social conflict can affect not only the rank-and-file personnel of State institutions, including the army, but also the middle echelon and even some at the topmost pinnacle, even if only temporarily and for limited aims.

When Lenin refers to "the ability" of the ruling class to make use of its powers of coercion it is precisely this aspect to which he is drawing our attention. Clearly, the converse of Lenin's point—namely, the *in*ability of the ruling class in some situations to make use of its own forces of coercion at a moment of crisis—is of very considerable importance, and especially for those concerned with the tactics of revolutionary struggle.

Professor Crane Brinton has written that "it is almost safe to say that no government is likely to be overthrown until it loses the ability to make adequate use of its military and police powers."[10] Making basically the same point, and in a much more emphatic manner, Le Bon has argued that "It is obvious that revolutions have never taken place, and will never take place, save with the aid of an important faction of the army."[11] (The situation has been different in many third world countries where, in the course of the national liberation struggle, it has been necessary for the indigenous people to create their own armed forces and confront the foreign troops of the imperialists.)

The propositions of Crane Briton and Le Bon were confirmed by the events in Portugal on April 25, 1974, when, largely through the action of the Armed Forces Movement, it became possible to overthrow fascism which had clearly lost its "ability to compel by force if necessary".

Dr. George Rude has noted that it would seem to be "almost a truism that the key factor in determining the outcome of popular rebellion and disturbance is the loyalty or disaffection of the armed forces at the government's disposal".[12] Continuing his argument, Dr. Rude discusses the general propositions regarding the ability or otherwise of a ruling class to use the army to defend its system at a moment of crisis, and here, it seems to me, he puts his finger on the key issue.

"Such assertions," he writes, "are true enough as far as they go; yet they are not the whole truth and they even tend, when presented in such baldly military terms, to beg the further and more important question of why the army refuses to obey or why the government loses control of its means of defence. *Essentially, this is a social and political rather than a military question.* (italics added) For if a magistrate condones riots or soldiers fraternise with or refuse to fire on rebels, it is because the ties of class or political affiliation are at that moment stronger than allegiance to the established order of government."

Determining Factors

This emphasises the danger of a mechanical use of terms such as the State being an "instrument", "a machine", or "a weapon". Even more, it is politically hazardous to allow one's political thinking about the State and questions of political power to be influenced or dominated by conceptions arising from a strict verbal meaning of these terms. Armed forces are an instrument only in a very particular sense. They certainly include instruments, weapons, machines, such as guns and ammunition and so on, with which they are equipped. But whether or not the ruling class is able to rely unconditionally on this institution depends in the last resort not on the equipment or firing power of the armed forces, important as this may be, but on whether the armed forces are prepared to use their weapons against the rulers' opponents. In other words, it depends on social and political factors. This is why it is misleading to try and reduce everything to the slogan "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun". Political power grows out of the strength, unity, determination, political understanding and organisation of the mass of the people. It is this which, in the last resort, determines if, when and *in what direction* the guns are going to be used.

This was confirmed only too clearly in Portugal on April 25, 1974, when the democratic struggle of the Portuguese people, alongside the military resistance and success of the people of Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Angola, became such a powerful combination that opinions in the armed forces were decisively changed, thus opening the way to the formation of the Armed Forces Movement and the victory of April 25. The more recent setbacks suffered by the Armed Forces Movement and its virtual demise in no way invalidate this argument; on the contrary, they confirm it, since it has been mainly political factors which has produced a certain turn-around inside the Portuguese army.

The political factors which determine the behaviour of the armed forces are basically of two kinds. Firstly, there are the forces operating outside the army, primarily the political relationship of class forces. This largely determines the possibility and the degree of necessity for the ruling class to use the armed forces for political purposes. It helps to

[10] Crane Briton—*The Anatomy of Revolution*, New York, 1960.

[11] G. Le Bon—*The Psychology of Revolution*, New York, 1913.

[12] Dr. George Rude—*The Crowd in History*, 1730-1848, New York, 1964, p. 266.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

determine, too, whether there is an alternative open to the ruling class of seeking a solution not involving the use of the armed forces, by making concessions to its class opponents.

A clear example of the latter was the crisis in 1972 over the Pentonville 5, whom the British Government had to release in face of the massive protest of the whole Labour Movement and the threat of a general strike called by the General Council of the TUC to secure the release of the arrested dockers. Theoretically, the Government could have defied the Labour Movement and called on the armed forces to break the projected strike; but in the given circumstances, in the light of the then existing relationship of forces, it deemed it wiser not to risk a further escalation of the class confrontation by using its full State power, even though the armed forces displayed no signs of inner contradiction or division at that given time, and in that limited sense, therefore, presented themselves as "an instrument" ready for use. The Government, despite its having the armed forces, the law, prisons, police, and mass media at its disposal, had to retreat; although it has to be borne in mind that in this particular conflict there was no question of a change of political power involved, only the release of five men from prison resulting in a heavy blow against the Industrial Relations Act. So the Government, in this instance, organised a tactical withdrawal while keeping its political power and domination intact, but a little bruised.

Yet, one should not ignore the immense potential power of the British working class revealed in those conflicts and its possibility, if united and with a clear political vision, of making a challenge to the big monopolies not just for immediate demands but for a change of political power.

The Government faced similar problems with the UCS and other factory occupations, and the 1972 miners' strike. Again, the ruling class had all the state institutions available to it, but the relation of forces at the time obliged it to seek other ways of overcoming the problems involved, even at the cost of big concessions.

Internal and External Influences

But circumstances operating outside the armed forces are only one factor determining whether the ruling class possesses "the ability to compel by force". There are also factors operating inside the State institutions themselves, though these, in the last resort, are produced and precipitated by the surrounding circumstances, by the clash of classes, by ideological influences, by the economic and other crises of society and by the general strains in its entire fabric.

After all, the individuals who comprise the armed forces are in no sense completely isolated and immured from the surrounding great movements and shifts of public opinion. Influenced as they may be by the nature of their training, by the views projected by the most reactionary members of the top brass, by their class and social ties, by the purposes they are expected to fulfil, and by the fact of being part of a specialised, hierarchical institution, barracked and housed apart from the general population, they are nevertheless subject to other counter-influences. Their relatives and friends, in the midst of swirling changes taking place in civilian life, may themselves be progressively influenced to an extent by these developments. Some of this may rub off on officers and other ranks by letters, by personal contact and so on. Men in the armed forces read papers, journals and books, listen to radio, watch television, talk with one another. Despite the reactionary character of much of what they read, hear or see on their TV screens, the sight of a workers' demonstration with its slogans on the screen, even the occasional broadcast by a Communist on the radio, may have some influence on their thinking.

In countries where armed forces have been used against guerrilla forces, as in Peru, Uruguay, Bolivia, the experience of this fighting was, in fact, an important factor in producing a radical wing of the officer corps. In the case of Peru, where it was combined with special training for officers in social, economic and political matters, in the expectation that such instruction would assist them in acting to prop up the establishment, it had a somewhat contrary effect. This has happened, too, in those countries where the officers have been obliged to study Marxist writings and the works of guerrilla leaders such as Che Guevara, in the hope that this knowledge would make them more effective counter-insurgency operators. Once again, the result was often quite different.

Thus, as political situations mature, processes get under way inside the armed forces, and these processes sometimes reach a stage which makes it impossible for the ruling class to use the army against the people. In such cases things may develop to a situation, as in the Sudan in 1964, when the army officers showed reluctance to act against the people or intervene against the general strike which was a prime cause of the downfall of General Abboud. Or, it may reach a more advanced stage, as in Portugal in 1974, when the majority of the armed forces, including a decisive section of the middle officers and a few at the top, took a key part in toppling Caetano's fascist regime.

Both in the Sudan and in Portugal, up to the time of the downfall of the old regime, the armed forces were formally speaking at the disposal of the rulers. The "instrument", the "machine", was there. The equipment was available. The men were armed. They

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were trained and led by capable officers. But neither the soldiers nor the officers were "instruments" or "machines". They were thinking individuals, subject, even if in different ways, to the selfsame influences and political considerations that affect the thinking and behaviour of those not in uniform. And when the civilian population in both cases showed in no uncertain terms that it wanted to do away with the old system, when similar influences had worked their way into the armed forces, and when the most reactionary officers realised that they could no longer obtain obedience to their command if they tried to uphold the Government of the day, then the "machine" of the institutionalised force was no longer available to the rulers. It was politics that had the last word.

These experiences (and there are a number of others), indicate clearly what attitude a revolutionary movement should take towards the armed forces. Some people on the left adopt a crude, oversimplified approach, and regard the army as one monolithic and reactionary organisation, as the enemy which must be confronted and destroyed. Such barren anti-militarism, even if accompanied by reference to Marx and Lenin on the need to "smash the State" of the ruling class, is not a Marxist position, nor can it lead to revolutionary success.

Already, at the end of the nineteenth century, Engels was noting how technological advances in the army and its growth in size had rendered the old-style street fighting of 1848 of limited value *unless accompanied by other factors*. Yet, even up to 1848, he stressed that the main aim of street fighting was not to win outright military victory but to make the troops "yield to moral influences. . . . If they succeed in this, the troops fail to respond, or the commanding officers lose their heads, and the insurrection wins. . . . Even in the classic time of street fighting, therefore, the barricade produced more of a moral than a material effect. It was a means of shaking the steadfastness of the military."[13]

With changes after 1848, Engels argued that conditions had become far more unfavourable for civilian fighters and far more favourable for the military. This disadvantageous situation, wrote Engels, had to be "compensated by other factors", the principal one of which was "the masses themselves". But in order for the masses to understand what had to be done, "long, persistent work" was needed. This work was required in order to bring mass pressure to bear on the whole of society, including the State and especially the armed forces, in order to make the army yield to "moral influences" and "shake its steadfastness".

Struggle for Democratisation

Today, in the advanced capitalist countries in Western Europe, this has become a major question, both in the struggle to end reactionary and fascist regimes and in defence of democratic government. Experiences since the commencement of this century underline the necessity for the working class and democratic movement to influence the army, to win for it democratic rights and better conditions of service, promotion and pay, and to establish a situation in which troops yield to "moral influences" and begin to act as a defender of the nation, and of people's rights and aspirations, and cease being used internally as a tool of big business and reaction to suppress the people. In other words, the strategy to be followed—and this is being done, with increasing success, in Italy, France and Spain[14]—is not that of trying to "smash" the army of the ruling class, but of transforming it in order to deprive the monopolies of their possibilities of using the army to "compel by force".

The fact that even the army reared by Portuguese fascism could be won away from the monopolies at the moment of crisis and side with the people's anti-fascist revolution, justifies the correctness of this approach—and this is notwithstanding the difficulties that subsequently arose when the political balance in the armed forces shifted away from the left.

Neutralising, or winning part or even a majority of the army also helps the working class to win allies in civilian life. The middle strata are very much influenced by the attitude of the armed forces.[15] The officers play a particular role here because of their class and social links with such strata. But in addition, the army, as an institution, has considerable prestige among wide sections. The working class, too, is not unmindful of army behaviour, and the soldiers, after all, in Western Europe, are mainly workers. All this affects the total politics of the country.

The issue, therefore, is not the people versus the army, but whether the army will stand with the majority of people against the small minority who own the banks, land and industries, control the mass media and wield State power—or will it continue to act as the defender of privilege and reaction. It is in the interests of the people, and in the interests of the

[13] Frederick Engels—*Introduction to the Class Struggles in France*, 1848-1850, by Karl Marx (written and published in 1850); Introduction by Engels written in 1895: Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1. pp. 120-121 (Moscow/London, 1950).

[14] The same general position holds good for Portugal, too, despite the recent setbacks; and in Greece, too, the Communist Party is working in the same direction.

[15] The reverse is also true, and this is an additional and very important reason why the working class needs to establish an alliance with the middle strata.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

army itself, that it undergo a democratic transformation and become an institution for progress that assists the democratic transformation of society as a whole.

Word of Warning

There is one final word of warning here. I have argued that the progressive forces in the army, even the majority of the armed forces when the changes have gone that deep, can and must play an important role in helping to change society.

But there are certain limitations to this if one is considering, for example, the armies in Western Europe. The army personnel is of mixed class and social origin, with officers coming from upper and middle class families. All army personnel are tied to civilian life by a thousand strands. They reflect all the political tendencies in civilian life. The officers include individuals with ambitions and, sometimes, with Bonapartist hopes and strivings. As an institution, the army is autocratic, hierarchical, and at best paternal. It is used to instruct and command. Even when officers accept democracy it is often a kind of 'autocratic democracy', a democracy under their guidance and control. The army, therefore, cannot fulfil the role of a political party, nor can it act as a leader of the people. It has a role to play, but not as the commander of the revolution. If it tries to act as if it were, there can be acute dangers, as we have seen only too well in Portugal, not to mention third world countries such as Egypt, Syria and Peru.

(d) IS IT NECESSARY TO "SMASH THE STATE"?

Since the State, both in its coercive and non-coercive aspects, is a key pillar in the system of political power, those concerned with ending capitalism and constructing socialism must be concerned, too, with the question of the State and, above all, what must be done with it.

A revolution involves a change of class power. A socialist revolution requires a change of power from the hands of the big monopolies into the hands of the working class and its allies.

On more than one occasion Lenin emphasised the well-known formula of Marx regarding the necessity to "smash the State" of the bourgeoisie. Lenin even employs such drastic terms as "smash the old machinery of State to atoms", and "leave not a stone of it standing". It would, I believe, be misleading to try and apply such ideas mechanically, especially in conditions of Britain or other advanced capitalist countries. In a certain sense one can argue that there is a certain ambiguity in Lenin's remarks on this question if one simply puts side by side his various observations at different times and in connection with varying circumstances. For example, notwithstanding his urgent calls to "smash the State", in his last years he more than once felt obliged to point out that, in fact, one of the things which the Bolsheviks failed to do was to "smash the State". This whole question clearly merits at least some discussion.

Writing in April, 1917,[16] Lenin noted—"The world-wide experience of bourgeois and landlord governments has developed two methods of keeping people in subjection. The first is violence"—and here he cites Russia where the tsars "demonstrated to the Russian people the maximum of what can and cannot be done by this hangman's method".

But he then goes on to point to "another method, best developed by the English and French bourgeoisie, who learnt their lesson in a series of great revolutions and revolutionary movements of the masses." This other method, he explains, is "the method of deception, flattery, fine phrases, numberless promises, petty sops and concessions of the unessential while retaining the essential."

There is, possibly, too much of a sweeping contrast between the two methods described here. After all, the tsars did not rely *only* on the hangman. The peasants, the vast majority of the people, even when they began to turn against the landlords in 1905, still had faith in the tsar, the "little Father", and were, in large part, also influenced in their thinking by the priests; thus confirming, once again, that all forms of political power rely on a certain measure of "consent" as well as on the powers of "coercion". Similarly, modification needs to be made as well regarding Lenin's definition of the second method utilised in Britain, France and other West European countries; for here, too, alongside the deception and concessions through which the big capitalists secure the "consent" of the people, there is also reliance on the use of the State's coercive powers.

Yet, broadly speaking, Lenin was absolutely correct to point to the essence of the difference in the two instances—tsarist Russia relying *mainly* on force, Western Europe *mainly* on deception and concession. It is not illogical, therefore, to argue that if, as Lenin pointed out, there were two rather different methods of bourgeois rule, then there could be, generally speaking, two different methods of ending that rule.

Winning the Majority

Careful reading of Lenin's writings up to the October revolution, and in the first years after it, indicates that Lenin tended to link the question of "smashing the State" with the question of the political party of the working class winning to its side not only the majority of wage workers, but also

[16] V. I. Lenin—*Selected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 51.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the majority of all working people, including peasants and other small producers, artisans and traders. Lenin's conclusion, emphasised on more than one occasion, was that under conditions of capitalism the rulers had such great power to maintain their intellectual hold over the mass of the petty-bourgeoisie and even over substantial sections of workers, that it was impossible to win a majority.

First, he argued, the working class had to "smash the State"; only after that was accomplished could the working class, with the aid of State power, win a majority. Thus, in December, 1919, he wrote:

> ". . . the proletariat must *first* overthrow the bourgeoisie and conquer the power of the State, and then use the power of the State . . . as an instrument of its class in order to gain the sympathy of the majority of the toilers."[17]

Again:

> ". . . the power of the State in the hands of one class, the proletariat, can become and should become an instrument for winning over the non-proletarian toiling masses to the side of the proletariat, an instrument for wresting these masses away from the bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeois parties."[18]

And again:

> "The proletariat cannot triumph unless it wins a majority of the population over to its side, but . . . to confine the winning of a majority to, or to make it conditional upon, obtaining a majority of votes at the poll *under the rule of the bourgeoisie* is either the densest stupidity, or a sheer attempt to fool the workers. . . ."[19]

And then he adds:

> "In order to win the majority of the population, the proletariat must, in the first place, overthrow the bourgeoisie and seize the power of the State; secondly, it must set up a Soviet government and smash the old machinery of State to atoms."[20]

Lenin explains that the "solid majority of the population" is made up not only of the proletariat or "that section of the proletariat which realises its revolutionary aims and is capable of fighting for their realisation", but also of a "mass of toilers" who do not realise that they are "proletarians", who are "half-proletarian and half petty-bourgeois", who have no faith in their own strength nor that of the proletariat, and who do not realise "that it is possible to secure the satisfaction of their essential needs by expropriating the exploiters."

The Proletariat and its Allies

These sections of the working population, avers Lenin, are "allies for the vanguard of the proletariat"; moreover, all these toilers, together with the proletariat "form a solid majority of the population." But once again Lenin comes back to his essential point:

> ". . . the proletariat can win over these allies only with the aid of such an instrument as the power of the State, i.e. only after the bourgeoisie has been overthrown and its State machinery smashed."[21]

The final point worth noting here is Lenin's argument as to why he considered that the working class, even if a minority of the population, is able to break the power of the capitalists.

> "In all capitalist countries the strength of the proletariat is incomparably greater than its numerical strength in proportion to the total population. This is due to the fact that the proletariat economically dominates the centre and nerve of the whole economic system of capitalism, and also because under capitalism the proletariat economically and politically expresses the true interests of the vast majority of the toilers.
>
> "For this reason the proletariat, even when it forms a minority of the population (or when the class-conscious and truly revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat forms a minority of the population), is capable of overthrowing the bourgeoisie and of then gaining numerous allies from among the mass of semi-proletarians and petty bourgeois, who otherwise would never have expressed themselves in favour of the rule of the proletariat, and would never have understood the conditions and aims of the proletariat, and who only by their subsequent experience become convinced that the dictatorship of the proletariat is inevitable, proper and legitimate."[22]

The argument is clear enough. Under conditions of capitalism it is not possible to win a majority for socialism. Therefore the working class, even if a minority, must first take power. This involves a violent smashing of the existing State machine. Only *after* power has been seized, the State smashed, and proletarian power established, will it be possible for the working class, with the aid of their new State, to win a majority to its side.

Strategy in Advanced Capitalist Countries

One has only to ponder over this approach for a short while to realise that it really has no relevance

[17] V. I. Lenin—*The Elections to the Constituent Assembly*, *Selected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 473.

[18] *ibid.* p. 472.

[19] *ibid.* p. 473.

[20] *ibid.*

[21] *ibid.* p. 484.

[22] *ibid.* p. 484.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at all to the strategies for socialism worked out by the Communist Parties in the advanced capitalist countries. There is not, to my knowledge, a single programme or Congress document of any Communist Party in Western Europe (whatever different views they may hold on other matters) which today bases itself on the conception of the taking of power by a minority as the only way to win the support of the majority. Surely, therefore, if Lenin's view on the "smashing of the State" was so linked with his belief that without this it was not possible to win a majority to the side of the working class, one is justified in querying at least one aspect of the idea of "smashing the State".

It should be remembered that these concepts of Lenin up to 1919 were put forward under the impact of the harsh nature of the struggle in Russia, the harsh realities of the class structure of Russia (a small working class in a sea of peasants), the impact of the imperialist war (with the consequent militarisation even of the advanced capitalist States, accompanied by a vast growth of the bureaucracy), and the experience of the two Russian revolutions of 1917.

Yet all this notwithstanding, Lenin did not entirely shut his eyes to other possibilities, and even gave a clue as to an alternative way. In one of his references to the need for the working class to "smash the bourgeois State machine" and then use it to satisfy the needs of the people in order to "gain the sympathy and support of the majority of the toiling non-proletarian masses",[23] Lenin remarks, in passing: "The contrary would be a rare exception in history (ay, and in such an exception the bourgeoisie may resort to civil war, as was shown in the case of Finland.")

No Longer a "Rare Exception"

The question is: Has the "rare exception" today become a more realistic alternative road in Western Europe, where Lenin had already noted an important difference in the form of ruling class power as compared with tsarist Russia (see above), as Gramsci (as we noted above) was to do later?

What gives added weight to this whole matter, and, to a considerable degree, adds strength to the argument that the "rare exception" has today passed the stage of being exceptional and has now become the real alternative for the people in Western Europe,[24] is the fact that after 1919 Lenin, who in his last years gave much thought to developments in Europe, returned to this question of winning the majority. Under the impact of the defeat of the armed uprisings in Germany in March, 1921, Lenin apparently revised his views.[25]

At the Third Congress of the Communist International in 1921 an intense debate took place. There was fierce discussion both before the Congress and during the Congress itself. The issue was the question of "winning a majority". Analysing the reasons for the German defeats in 1921, Lenin declared that to be successful in achieving a revolutionary change it was necessary for the Communists "to have the majority behind them all over the country, and not just in one small district."[26] Taking up this theme in the actual preparations for the Third Congress of the CI, Lenin took issue with Radek, Zinoviev and others who wanted to delete from the draft thesis the reference to the need to win a majority of the working class. Lenin insisted that winning a majority of the workers was "the basis of everything", and added:

> "The tactics of the Communist International should be based on a steady and systematic drive to win a majority of the working class, *first and foremost within the old trade unions*. Then we shall win for certain, whatever the course of events."

At the Congress itself Lenin developed his ideas still further and emphasised that "what is essential to *win* and retain power is not only the majority of the working class . . . but also the majority of the working and exploited rural population"[27]—which meant, in practice, an absolute majority of the population.

This is clearly a fundamental modification of his former views. Lenin recognised the new situation developing in the world, and also the characteristics of Western Europe which differed in important aspects from those of pre-revolutionary Russia. This, again, should justify one querying whether the term "smash the State machine" is adequate to embrace today's problems and possibilities. But there are additional reasons why, it seems to me, the term is inappropriate.

Term Now Inappropriate

Firstly, even in the classic formulae about "smashing the state" one finds the phrase "the proletariat cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machine and wield it for its own purposes."[28]

[23] *ibid.* p. 483.

[24] The same arguments hold good for other advanced capitalist countries; the Japanese Communist Party, for example, envisages this alternative road as the way to socialism in Japan, on the basis of a democratic majority.

[25] Those who may fear being labelled "revisionist" because they find some idea of Lenin's no longer valid should take courage from Lenin who never hesitated to revise Lenin if experience showed this was necessary.

[26] V. I. Lenin—*Collected Works*, Vol. 42, p. 323.

[27] V. I. Lenin—*Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 476.

[28] V. I. Lenin—*Can the Bolsheviks retain State Power?*, *Selected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 262.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The capitalist State must be replaced "by a new one." Talking in terms of "smashing" the State can, I believe, serve to hide the essence of the question, which is that the working class needs a new State, a qualitatively different State suited to the aims of building socialism.

Secondly, Lenin himself drew attention to parts of the State which did not require "smashing". These included certain non-coercive parts of the State, such as banking, statistics, and accounting:

> "This apparatus must not, and should not be broken up. It must be wrested from the control of the capitalists; the capitalists must be *cut off, lopped away, chopped off* from it, together with the threads by which they transmit their influence". . . .[29] It is not enough to 'get rid' of the capitalists; it is necessary (after getting rid of the useless ones, the incorrigible resisters) to employ them in *the service of the new State*. This applies to the capitalists as well as to the higher bourgeois intellectuals, office workers, etc."[30]

Thirdly, the non-coercive sides of the State in Britain today are far more comprehensive, more diverse, and have a far larger personnel than the State in old Russia. Our State institutions embrace extensive economic functions and the nationalised industries, as well as education, the health services, social services, and so on. In essence what is required in these State sectors is a democratic transformation and forms of democratic control, not any "smashing" of such bodies which, under socialism, can really serve the people's interests once the essential democratic changes have been made.

Differences with Russia in 1917

Fourthly, the personnel employed in the various departments of the British State today bear no comparison with those employed in the tsarist State of 1917. In a certain sense quantity has produced a new quality. The needs of a modern State like that of Britain requires such an expansion of personnel that, in addition to the top ruling class personnel, the State has had to employ immense numbers from the lower middle class and even from the working class, compared with earlier States which relied so much for its personnel on those coming from a higher strata of society. One has only to think of the average State employee in a Chekhov story or as depicted by Gogol to get the real flavour of the difference.

The vast majority of the hundreds of thousands employed in our State and in local Government, too, are in trade unions affiliated to the TUC through which they are linked with the industrial working class. Their members take part in strikes and other protest actions, often alongside other trade unionists. Radical political tendencies are making themselves felt in the civil service unions and in the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) and the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE).

There is no reason why a solid majority of the State personnel, apart from those at the top, cannot be won to ally their fortunes with the industrial working class, with other white-collar sections, and with the broad anti-monopoly alliance for a radical new Britain and, through that experience, won for socialism, too. Such a possibility of winning the majority of the personnel of the State never existed in Russia in Lenin's time.

Fifthly, in most West European countries the working class and democratic movement in proportion to the population as a whole is a much larger and more weighty factor in political life, constitutes a far greater force in the economy and potentially represents a massive power which can attract to its side the overwhelming majority of the population. In Britain, in fact, the wage-earning class and its families already constitute a majority.

Sixthly, the coercive sides of the State are beginning to be influenced by the big political developments of our time. We have already noted the role played by the Armed Forces Movement in overthrowing the fascist regime in Portugal. In France, where the Communist Party has worked out a whole programme of demands for the armed forces, it has been estimated that 50 per cent of the officers voted for Mitterand, the joint candidate of the united left, in the last Presidential elections. In Italy, where important public conferences on the armed forces have been initiated by the Communist Party and where, too, detailed programmatic demands have been elaborated (and proposals worked out, too, for the police and prison system), it has been estimated that at least 40 per cent of conscript soldiers were communist voters even before the recent election. The figure is no doubt now still higher.

Whatever the precise figures, it is clear that the political influences making themselves felt in civilian life are washing over the armed forces in France and Italy, as they are to an extent, too, in Spain. There are also indications in France that parts of the police force, and large numbers of magistrates are beginning to express sentiments that place them increasingly on the side of democratic change and not in the camp of defenders of the status quo. The same tendencies can be seen in Italy, where, in the recent general elections, 31 per cent of the police force (it was 34 per cent in Milan) voted Communist, making it the first Party among the police; and in Spain where a number of judges and other law officers are coming out against the present Government

[29] *ibid.* p. 266.

[30] *ibid.* p. 269.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and in favour of radical democratic change.

In Britain, of course, the same tendencies are not yet apparent. Apart from the fact that we have a professional army, which makes things more complex, the political movement in the country as a whole has not yet reached the stage that it has in France or Italy, and it is therefore not surprising that substantial changes in the outlook of the personnel of the army and other coercive departments of the State are not yet in evidence. This confirms once again that it is above all political developments in a given country, the thinking and actions of the civilian population, that are prime causes of changes in the attitude and behaviour of the armed forces. Because the political struggle in Britain is at a different stage from that of France or Italy we have a dangerous situation in which authoritarian trends are being more and more asserted. In this situation the coercive sides of the State could become still more remote from the people. This is an additional reason why the struggle must be waged for the democratic transformation of all departments of the State.

This is not an easy concept for the British Labour Movement to accept, especially in relation to the coercive institutions of the State. Denunciations of the police as "fascist pigs" or tendencies to regard the armed forces as a total "write-off"—feelings which are often understandable in the face of police violence against strikers, demonstrators, black youth and so on, and in the face of army behaviour in Northern Ireland—are no solution to the problem. Our main enemy is the big monopolies. Our aim is to build a democratic, socialist Britain. The members of the police and the armed forces must also have a place in that new Britain. They must be won to serve the people, serve the nation, and no longer be placed in a position in which they have to act as the defenders of the power and privilege of big business.

Essential steps to transform these institutions so that they serve the people include securing for their personnel the same civic, political and trade union rights as those enjoyed by the rest of the population. In this respect, it is significant that a number of Labour MPs recently argued strongly in Parliament for trade union rights and other democratic innovations for members of the armed forces. Alongside the effort to win democratic rights for the personnel of all State institutions it is vital to secure democratic changes in the functioning of these departments, as well as to obtain a greater measure of democratic control over them by Parliament, by local councils, and by public bodies and social organisations. The recent proposals of some councillors for them to have some powers of inspection and supervision over the prisons in their locality is an interesting suggestion in this connection.

Transforming the State institutions, including its coercive wings, does not signify that we would limit our aims to changing what exists. Included in the conception of transformation would be not only the addition of new departments and institutions and the introduction of new democratic methods of work involving different forms of people's participation, but also the "lopping away" or "chopping off" (to use Lenin's term) of some departments which require abolition, not changing. This would involve, for example, substantial parts of "military" intelligence, of the Special Branch of the police, and other institutions whose main activities are directed against the working class and the democratic movement. Personnel, also, would be involved, in the sense that those members of State departments who showed an inability or unwillingness to carry out the politics of a Government elected on a socialist programme would obviously have to be found other work.

While many of these changes would only be won under a Socialist Government, it is necessary for the labour and progressive movement to strive for such democratic transformations now. The democratic transformation of the State may be a long protracted process, in which changes are won, step by step, even though in that process there may be sudden sharp conflicts and dramatic turning points, at which much more decisive innovations are introduced.

There is a seventh and final reason why our approach to the State cannot be a mechanical repetition of what Lenin considered appropriate for Russia in 1917. We live in an epoch of big world changes. The favourable balance of world forces makes the question of direct military intervention by the imperialists in support of counter-revolution much more difficult. It cannot, of course, be entirely ruled out; but in Western Europe, for example, with big progressive developments taking place in the same epoch in a number of countries, the possibility of direct interference by the imperialists becomes all the more hazardous for them. This, too, it seems to me, must have an important influence on the possibilities of taking the State away from the monoplies in a new way.

In a Socialist Britain

There is a final comment that needs making about our perspective in Britain. I have said at the outset that all political power is based on a combination of coercion and "consent". How would this apply in a socialist Britain?

First, our strategy for revolution in Britain is based on the idea that it must enjoy the democratic consent of the majority, a consent which includes it being expressed in an electoral majority for socialism. Secondly, we envisage socialism in Britain being constructed, at all stages, through the democratic

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

consent of the majority and democratic participation of the people as a whole, both in decision-making and in carrying through the decisions democratically arrived at. Thirdly, the armed forces would no longer be used internally in civilian disputes, but would be responsible for defending the country against external aggression. Fourthly, all democratic gains would be protected, and new democratic possibilities opened up to the people. There would be a system of plurality of political parties, all of them, including those opposed to socialism, being allowed to carry on normal political activity. Whatever the electoral verdict of the people, we would abide by it. If a socialist government were subsequently voted out by the majority of the people, we would accept that, too. The threat of civil war would, therefore, not arise from our side, from the side of the working class.

Fifthly, if the monopolies or their supporters attempted to use violent and illegal methods to thwart the democratic decisions of the majority, or to interfere with anyone's democratic rights, then the forces of the law would be used to deal with such illegal activity; and, if necessary, the people themselves, through their democratic organisations, would mobilise their strength to back up the efforts of the State against the enemies of democracy. If the enemies of democracy were able to influence sections of the army against the people, then those members of the armed forces that remained loyal to the democratically elected government would be expected to act against military rebels who, by supporting illegal actions against the Government, would have committed mutiny and would have to be dealt with accordingly by the army authorities and the Government.

Thus, in a socialist Britain, the powers of coercion would still exist alongside the people's consent to the measures being pursued by the Government. But these powers would be used only against those acting illegally to thwart the democratic decisions of the majority.

Poetry of the Thirties:

Three Left-Wing Poets

Louis MacNeice; John Cornford; Clive Branson

Margot Heinemann

(*The author studied at Cambridge University from 1931-35. She is now Principal Lecturer in English at Goldsmith's College, University of London. She is the author of the novel* The Adventurers *(published by Lawrence & Wishart in 1960) and with Noreen Branson of* Britain in the 1930s, *published by Weidenfeld & Nicholson, hardback, and Panther, paperback.*)

The nineteen thirties stand out as an exceptional moment in which the relation between literature, history and politics was unusually clear and direct. So deep was the crisis, so urgent the dangers, that many literary intellectuals, who in Britain have traditionally regarded their role as remote from politics, were forced to deal directly with social and political issues, to take sides about them and in many cases to question the meaning of the system itself.

After having been largely dismissed by the critics for a generation as too ideological, the poetry of the thirties is getting much more attention today, especially among young readers, to whom it often seems more lively and immediate than much written in the last twenty years. Universities and colleges run courses on it, critical books keep coming out, and exhibitions and lectures by survivors are crowded. As Roy Fuller noted after speaking at one such occasion, it's the positive commitment that rouses interest now: (in the thirties, he says, no one would have queued up to listen to surviving writers of the 1890s).

> "The Thirties were a time when the brotherhood of man was not only believed in but seemed capable, of achievement. The labour movement, despite its weaknesses, couldn't be regarded as other than international in scope. The crises of the times were such as to seem to require a social revolution to cure. . . . Poets envisaged a grow-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> ing audience whose ideals were social justice, and they tried to bring into their verse a subject-matter of real concern to such an audience."
> (*Gods and Professors.*)

All that is true, and it's not surprising that these poets are finding a wider audience now, when once again there's a sense of breakdown and crisis and far more people feel it urgent to do something towards changing the system itself.

The Myth of the Thirties

However, the myth of the thirties too often presented to students is a selective and devaluing one. Its components as learned at school or university or through critical monographs are roughly as follows:

1. The left-wing poets who mattered were Auden, Spender and Day Lewis. Other young intellectuals were led into Communism by their work (with some help from prose writers like Isherwoood and Upward) and left it disillusioned when they did at the end of the thirties.

2. The Marxism and Leftism of the period was romantic, ill-informed and often intellectually dishonest. Writers advocated revolution and violence but were remote from understanding or experience of what the words meant. (See for example Orwell's well-known essay in *Inside the Whale.*) Some were starry-eyed innocents, others cynics or cowards.

3. Both the politics and the poetry were utterly discredited by later events.

4. Hence the thirties was for left-wing writers 'a low dishonest decade', from which nothing can now be learned except that the British people, unlike the intellectuals, were instinctively wise to keep out of phoney ideological conflicts until it was almost too late, when the word was finally given by the proper authorities.

There are alternative versions of the myth: for example the one currently being publicised by the ultra-left establishment at the BBC, according to which immediate revolution was on the order of the day in Spain and Western Europe, but was sabotaged by the Comintern and its right-wing policy of Popular Fronts, which deceived many writers. But all versions lead to the conclusion that the poets were mistaken in trying to mix writing and politics, art and life. The epitaph on the thirties was written by Auden in his elegy on Yeats in 1939:

> "For poetry makes nothing happen; it survives
> In the valley of its saying where executives
> Would never want to tamper."

Poetry and Politics

It's time for Marxists to provide a better account of the period—though not by idealising it or turning tragic defeats into victories. The harsh fact is that the working-class and anti-fascist movements in the west, heroic though they were, were just not strong enough. Yet this does not mean their efforts were wasted: without them the disaster would have been far worse. The commitment of the thirties generation helped to ensure that in the end it was not the fascists who won, and it has been part of whatever advance we have made since:[1] and that goes too for the writers.

For it is just not true that poetry 'makes nothing happen'. Yeats himself knew that when he brooded:

> Did those words of mine send out
> Certain men the English shot?

Not all poetry is, or should be, concerned with or directly committed to political struggle. (Auden's *Spain,* a poem sold as a pamphlet to help Spanish Medical Aid, was exceptional even in the thirties). But in the longer term the poets do help to form the way we see our world and the possible alternatives to it, not only by their explicit statements but by the way they shape the very language in which we think. In that sense poetry does help to make things happen or prevent them from happening—however distressing that responsibility may sometimes be. And in times of exceptional tension, like the nineteen thirties, poetry may work a good deal more directly than that. As Terry Eagleton says in *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (p. 58):

> "There are periods and societies where conscious, 'progressive' political commitment need not be a necessary condition for producing major art; there are other periods—fascism, for example—when to survive and produce as an artist at all involves the kind of questioning which is likely to result in explicit commitment. For such societies, conscious political partisanship, and the capacity to produce significant art at all, go spontaneously together. Such periods, however, are not limited to fascism. There are less 'extreme' phases of bourgeois society in which art relegates itself to minor status, becomes trivial and emasculated, because the sterile ideologies it springs from yield it no nourishment. . . . In such an era, the need for explicitly revolutionary art again becomes pressing. It is a question to be seriously considered whether we are not ourselves living in such a time."[2]

[1] This point is more fully argued than I have space to do here in the last two chapters of *Britain in the 1930s,* by Noreen Branson and Margot Heinemann (Weidenfeld, 1971).

[2] Terry Eagleton—*Marxism and Literary Criticism,* Methuen, 1976, £2.50, paperback £1.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

One difficulty in understanding the period is that many of the finest poems of the thirties have been out of print for a generation or more. The best easily-available anthology, Robin Skelton's Penguin *Poetry of the Nineteen Thirties*, which readers of this article will want to consult, rescued some of them and restored the original text of some others (notably Auden's). But it is short and somewhat one-sided (nothing for instance from *Left Review* or *Poetry and the People*). It's frustrating that while thick academic volumes keep appearing—the latest being Samuel Hynes' sensitive and excellently researched *The Auden Generation* (1976)[3]—you can only read *New Country* or *New Signatures* in specialist libraries. The recent edition of John Cornford's poems and papers, the first since 1938, is therefore an important event.[4]

Eliot and Auden

It's important too to remember that by no means all literary intellectuals reacted to the crisis by moving to the left: often the reverse. T. S. Eliot, whose *Waste Land* had been the most powerful expression of cultural alienation in the twenties, recognised the force of the Marxist analysis of capitalism: 'it must be very hard for anyone who reads [Marx] without prejudice on the one hand, or without any definite religious faith on the other, to avoid accepting his conclusions.' But Socialism or Communism, the only viable alternatives, seemed much more directly than decaying capitalism to threaten the way of life which had been the basis of Bloomsbury, and of traditional high culture before that. For Eliot, the survival of art became identified with the maintenance of a 'hierarchic', class-divided society, and his social attitudes moved very decidedly towards the right.

After Eliot, Auden was by far the most gifted and original poet and the greatest influence on younger writers of the left. A proper Marxist study of his work is overdue. But I am not going to attempt that here.

In this article I want to concentrate on three left-wing poets who don't fit into the thirties myth as it's commonly presented—Louis MacNeice, whose writings give perhaps the most vivid and telling record of how the late thirties felt to English intellectuals; John Cornford and Clive Branson, Communists and revolutionary poets. To read their work—even the scraps of it I quote here—is to realise that much thirties poetry is alive now as literature *because* (not although) it's so deeply rooted in the extreme situation out of which it was written.

Louis MacNeice

Is it stretching a definition to call Louis MacNeice a 'left-wing poet'? I don't think so, though he's usually presented in surveys of the period as a 'sceptical liberal' in contradistinction to the more radical and Marxist Auden, Spender and Day Lewis. In fact his work of the later thirties is if anything more 'political' than theirs. He was never a Communist (as Day Lewis and Spender were for a time), but he did come, however unwillingly, to a strongly felt anti-fascist and socialist commitment which—unlike Auden or Spender—he never seems to have felt much need to modify. As late as 1942, asked about his political views, he wrote:

> "Politics: distrust all parties but consider capitalism must go. Visited Barcelona, New Year's 1939, and hold that in the Spanish Civil War the balance of right was certainly on the side of the Republican Government; the situation, however, much more complicated than represented in the English press."
> (Quoted Kunitz and Haycraft, *20th Century Authors*, p. 889.)

Son of a Protestant clergyman in Northern Ireland, educated at public school and Oxford, after his romantic early marriage MacNeice found himself in 1930 teaching classics at Birmingham University—in the great industrial city, yet cut off by elegance and comfort from being part of it. As he wrote in his witty autobiography *The Strings are False*:

> "For five years Mariette and I lived together in Birmingham and all that time we were living on an island. . . . The trouble is that you cannot write in a hothouse. Mariette would plug a leg of lamb full of rosemary and cloves, and that was the event of the day" (p. 133).

"Autumn Journal"

Under the shadow of the crisis 'our intellectuals seemed to be living in a tank'—with the exception of the group of poets around *New Signatures* who had begun to be interested in Communism. MacNeice, though feeling that the Communists' programme was marred by wishful thinking and oversimplification, nevertheless 'joined them in their hatred of the status quo. I wanted to smash the aquarium.'

[3] Samuel Hynes—*The Auden Generation*. The Bodley Head, 1976, £6.50.

[4] *Understand the Weapon: Understand the Wound. Selected Writings of John Cornford*, edited by Jonathan Galassi, Carcanet Press, 1976, £3.90. This important new publication is the essential source, in print today, of John Cornford's writings. Referred to henceforth in this article as UWUW.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By far the most impressive of his poems to read now is *Autumn Journal* (published 1939), too long for the anthologies to give more than snippets and hence not widely known. In form it's an uncorrected diary of the months around Munich, with 24 entries or sections. In an introductory note MacNeice wrote:

> "In as much as it is half-way towards a didactic poem I trust that it contains some 'criticism of life' or implies some standards which are not merely personal. I was writing it from August 1938 to the New Year and have not altered any passages relating to public events in the light of what happened after the time of writing."

This determination not to alter the record (in sharp contrast to Auden's thirties poems, so often corrected, rewritten or suppressed) makes for an unusual kind of dramatic effect. The honesty is itself impressive; but more than that, the growth and structure of the poem consists in the changing situation and the changing ideas and feelings of the poet about it. This is, after all, the order in which people live their history, moving forward untidily into the unknown rather than looking backwards with orderly hindsight and tidying away the mistakes.

The poem is descriptive rather than metaphorical: the tone deceptively relaxed and conversational, avoiding the definitive epigrammatic effect which stricter forms tend to give, yet in its power of sensuous imagery going far beyond the 'journalism' as which it's sometimes dismissed. The poet's lack of certainty, his tentativeness and probing, are suggested by the irregular rhythmic movement, almost at times like the comic doggerel of Ogden Nash, yet capable at any moment of becoming lyrical. Rhymes are often used to reinforce the sense of discord and inconclusiveness, as when the eighth section ends:

> "Glory to God for Munich,
> And stocks go up and wrecks
> Are salved and politicians' reputations
> Go up like Jack-on-the-Beanstalk: only the Czechs
> Go down and without fighting."

The technical skills are clear in the beautiful ironic opening section, with the poet returning from holiday in the old privileged country-house world of shaven lawn and close-clipped yew, pure Betjeman England:

> "Macrocarpa and cypress
> And roses on a rustic trellis and mulberry trees,
> And bacon and eggs on a silver dish for breakfast,
> And all the inherited assets of bodily ease,
> And all the inherited worries, rheumatism and taxes,
> And whether Stella will marry and what to do with Dick,
> And the branch of the family that lost their money in Hatry,
> And the passing of the Morning Post and of life's climacteric,
> And the growth of vulgarity, cars that pass the gate-lodge
> And crowds undressing on the beach. . . ."

Note the film-like selection of detail—the silver breakfast dish epitomising the old-fashioned gracious living that MacNeice with part of his mind couldn't help enjoying; the absurd rhyme-words (Dick/climacteric) delicately suggesting the absence of real dignity and ease; and finally the ferocious snobbery against common people outside the gates. As the poet returns to London, nostalgic for the beauty of the older world and the wife who has left him, it's with the cheerful working-class crowds back from holiday to their harder working year that he strives to identify—not only the crowd as it is now, but what it may become in a new order:

> "Where skill will no longer languish nor energy be trammelled
> To competition and graft,
> Exploited in subservience but not allegiance
> To an utterly lost and daft
> System that gives a few at fancy prices
> Their fancy lives,
> While ninety-nine in the hundred who never attend the banquet
> Must wash the grease of ages off the knives."

More than 'Sceptical Liberalism'

'Sceptical liberalism' is certainly no way to describe this: even though the poet himself admits the personal temptation of the highbrow to 'sleep on a mattress of easy profits' and refuse to join any socialist movement for fear his motives may not be absolutely pure. Wit and self-mockery do not disguise his longing for solidarity and unity:

> "First no doubt to stumble, then to walk with others,
> And in the end—with time and luck—to dance."

This is still the relatively buoyant hopeful mood which filled so many intellectuals in 1938. What changed all that was Munich. The relevant sections of the poem (v-viii) are a vivid evocation of how it felt in those days:

> "Hitler yells on the wireless,
> The night is damp and still,
> And I hear dull blows on wood outside my window;
> They are cutting down the trees on Primrose Hill.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The wood is white like the roast flesh of chicken,
Each tree falling like a closing fan;
No more looking at the view from seats beneath
the branches,
Everything is going to plan;
They want the crest of this hill for anti-aircraft."

The vandalised trees prefigure the beginning of immense violence, smashing the peaceful world. Open-air meetings ('the national conscience') call on the Government to stand by the Czechs. The poet watches the territorials at work on half-hearted ARP, loses his dog, finds her at the police station:

"and went for a cup
Of coffee to an all-night shelter and heard a
taxi-driver
Say, 'It turns me up
When I see these soldiers in lorries."

The taxi-driver and MacNeice share human reservations about war that a great many people felt, very different from the jingo mood in 1914—war now seen as the squalid horror of Passchendaele, 'rivers in spate sprouting with drowning hands/And men like dead frogs floating'. It was not only fear (though most people expected a war would *begin* with poison gas and obliteration bombing of London), but also a doubt, especially perhaps in the labour movement, whether *any* war under Chamberlain's Government could be a just one.

Nevertheless the poet steels himself to expect 'fireworks here by this day week', and feels a bitter sense of shame and let-down when instead the outcome is Munich and the betrayal of the Czechs ('Save my skin and damn my conscience'), which he realises makes a probably worse war inevitable, the prospect of a defeat a real possibility. Visiting Birmingham where he had lived through the depression years he recalls the sensuous anti-political *dolce vita* of his first marriage as an evasion, a guilty symbol of the indifference that has doomed England and Europe:

"We slept in linen, we cooked in wine,
We paid in cash and took no notice
Of how the train ran down the line
Into the sun against the signal."

Self-Criticism

Nausea at his own cultural role in this set-up (the necessary starting-point for criticism of society in most radical intellectuals) is brilliantly given in the very funny 'back to normal' entries (ix to xiii) in which the teaching of classics (now at London University) is portrayed as the type of comic futility, persisted in because:

"If it were not for Lit. Hum. I might be climbing
A ladder with a hod."

The only anodyne is some kind of political action, even though

"The nicest people in England have always been
the least
Apt to solidarity and alignment."

In a by-election at Oxford he works for the Popular Front candidate, who is duly defeated in a 'coward vote' by Munich cheer Quintin Hogg.

Haunted by nightmare corpse-like figures from the concentration camps and battlefields, caught in a depression which neither drink nor love-affairs can lift, he travels via a fashionable Christmas in Paris to visit Barcelona, the heroic city now at breaking-point after two and a half years of war, where

"Still they manage to laugh,
Though they have no eggs, no milk, no fish, no
fruit, no tobacco, no butter,
Though they live upon lentils and sleep in the
Metro
. . . The human values remain, purged in the fire.
And it appears that every man's desire
Is life rather than victuals."

And here at last he's able to find resolution to face the grim future, in contact with the Spanish people:

"Whose matter-of-fact faith and courage shame
Our niggling equivocations—
We who play for safety,
A safety only in name,
Whereas these people contain truth, whatever
Their nominal facade.
Listen: a whirr, a challenge, an aubade—
It is the cock crowing in Barcelona."

In its strength and its weakness, its waverings and its commitment, *Autumn Journal* marvellously evokes the period. At the same time it's very clear how MacNeice, as leftward-moving intellectual, respects and feels the need for a group less compromised, less attracted by the old society than himself to drive the way forward into the new. But the moment of unity passed with 1939. Kept out of the Navy by poor eyesight, he worked as radio producer and writer through the war, and wrote some of the few good poems about the London blitz; but he never did anything quite like this again.

A Lift to Birmingham

MacNeice and John Cornford met only once, in the spring of 1936. According to MacNeice's own characteristic anecdote (*The Strings are False*,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

p. 157) he'd spent a weekend in Cambridge drowning his depression in drink and social life, and afterwards gave John and two other students a lift back to Birmingham. John he saw as sharply contrasted with the other two, who were 'one of those Birmingham students who wanted to be Oxford aesthetes of the 1920s vintage', and one Cambridge undergraduate, 'clever, careerist and bristling with statistics'. John was 'clever, communist and bristling with statistics', but

> "for him the conception of career was completely drowned in the Cause; he was going to Birmingham to stand trial for causing an obstruction while distributing communist pamphlets in the Bull Ring. . . . John Cornford was the first inspiring Communist I had met; he was the first who combined an unselfish devotion to his faith with a really first-class intelligence."[5]

On the way John sat in the back and talked about Trade Unions, and when the car got a puncture was 'cheerfully efficient', unlike the aesthetic character in the front:

> "This was the first and the last I saw of John Cornford. Later that year the war broke out in Spain and being no careerist, he went out to fight there and was killed."

MacNeice was a sophisticated person who knew a good many Communists, or people who were regarded as such, including the Auden generation of poets. Nevertheless he notes Cornford as the first *inspiring* one; and this half-comic glimpse of a real Communist intellectual has some importance for his later writing (indeed there seem to be echoes of *Full Moon at Tierz* in the last Spanish section of *Autumn Journal*).

John Cornford

John Cornford thought of himself as an active Communist and full-time revolutionary, rather than as a poet, though he had an intense interest in poetry and had written a good deal before he left school. While at University (1933-36) he wrote few poems and those not mainly for publication. His death in Spain, fighting for the Republic, made those he wrote there widely known; but it still seems odd to find him mentioned in so many histories of the period as 'the poet John Cornford'.[6]

[5] MacNeice got the story slightly wrong. What John had actually been arrested for was distributing trade union recruiting leaflets on behalf of the trades council outside a big factory, and the trial was a test case to establish the right of the trades council to do this without police harassment.

[6] UWUW, ed. J. Galassi, pp. 44-62.

Brought up in beautiful peaceful Cambridge, one of the most favoured environments in the world for intellectuals, he was conscious very early that this little world ignored the cruelty and violence outside it. Where Louis MacNeice even in Birmingham wrote of himself as 'living on an island', isolated by comfort and beauty and money, Cornford consciously cut his way out into a different life. At 15, as his letters show, he was already insisting that poetry should be able to include *any* kind of subject and feeling, not just the beautiful subjects and nice feelings found in his mother's poems (where he perceptively diagnosed real and darker emotions which were refused expression); and that it should be written in a language not too far removed from that of everyday life.

At fifteen he was excitedly imitating early Auden; at sixteen, still at school, studying his way into Marxism by way of the Communist Manifesto and Capital ('easier than I expected'). At the earliest possible moment, after winning a Trinity history scholarship at 16, he threw himself out of Stowe against his parents' advice, went briefly to LSE and joined the Young Communist League, just at the moment before Hitler came to power. In Cambridge, from 1933 onwards, he became a leading member of the University Branch of the Communist Party.

John himself wrote a good deal about the need for the poet to be consciously involved in the movement to change society, and his five years after leaving school were packed with intense political activity. The role of detached observer he saw as a delusion, since everyone is inescapably involved in history and to do nothing is a form of support for the existing order.

Learning Through Action

His expression of these views is sometimes oversimplified, but the instinct and argument surely right: a revolutionary poet does need to know and discover at first hand what he writes about, as material experience and emotional commitment, not merely as abstract idea. He was conscious of knowing too little about the reality of exploitation and struggle—much less, he felt, than most young workers—but he was already aware that Auden and Spender knew even less. "Although politically they have rejected their class, they are still writing mainly for it." He could learn only through participation and action.

However, 'action' for him was in no sense an escape from thinking or studying the reality under his nose. The work on the leading committee of the Cambridge Communist Party included demonstrations against war and reception of the Hunger Marchers, chalking walls and heckling Black-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shirts: it also meant disciplined Marxist study and learning all he could about the labour movement. (As soon as he left school he had done some speaking to bus branches of the TGWU on London Transport finance, on behalf of the Labour Research Department.)

He read with the intense concentration and method he brought to his political work, whether he was studying history, or the Elizabethan/Jacobean dramatists (whose release of intellectual energy at the birth of a new social system he felt in some ways analogous to his own), or the speeches at the Seventh World Congress of the CI, or criticising the teaching of history at Cambridge from a Marxist angle. Given the life he was living, the question that looms so large for Stephen Spender at this time—should I write about my own feelings or about the revolution?—was a non-problem.

In modern poetry he was attracted especially by T. S. Eliot, Graves and Auden, all of whom he felt made poetry out of *any* subject and feeling. *The Waste Land* had been a great influence on him, evoking most powerfully the drabness and meaninglessness of the modern city and the disintegration of capitalist civilisation. But by this time he felt Eliot had 'collapsed into subjectivity' in poetry, and his social and critical attitudes (described by himself as Royalist, Tory, Anglo-Catholic) were leading him into anti-humanism, even a hesitant intellectual sympathy with a kind of clerical fascism.

Auden—sharper and more imaginative than the other *New Country* writers—had attracted Cornford ever since *Poems 1930,* which he read while still at school. Largely this was because of the imagery of Midland working-class towns and wrecked industrial landscapes (at the time these were John's 'ideal scenery' as well as Auden's), and also the sense of a doomed society, about to come to a violent and tragic end. He preferred this to the more hopeful but vaguer and more romantic early verse of Spender and Day Lewis.

The short poem *Org Com. discussion on Literature* (*UWUW*, p. 31) isn't deadly serious Marxist criticism, but it does make an authentic point about his own reactions. He did really feel that most modern poetry (including that of writers he greatly admired) was largely

> "The important words that come between
> The unhappy eye and the difficult scene."

Confronting Complexity

MacNeice in *Modern Poetry* (1938) argued that the new poets, while simplifying the issues, much as the man of action is forced to do, must nevertheless 'put in the shadows'. In fact, as Cornford's writings from Spain show—and the same could be said in a different way of his love-poetry—to go into action for one's belief is necessarily to confront complexity. It's much *easier* to simplify or distort if one is not involved at first hand.

Wilfred Owen, the example and inspiration for so much thirties poetry, was certainly no model of clinical detachment. The poetry came out of the disgusting sights and smells of the trenches, out of his identification with the men among whom he fought, and when he came to think the war was being unnecessarily prolonged he still felt the need to return to the front where he was killed. If he had not been the kind of man to do that, he could never have written those poems where 'the poetry is in the pity'.

Cornford's war was a different one from Owen's, the feelings about it were necessarily quite different; but the total involvement is comparable. His poetry is not as it is because he was writing it as 'propaganda' in the sense in which MacNeice defines the term, 'consciously and solely concerned with converting people to a cause or creed'. His belief is 'felt belief' and is certainly, as MacNeice would have it, 'compromised with his own individual observation'. Simply, as he says later in *Full Moon at Tierz,* 'Communism was my waking time'.

Poems at University

The few personal poems John wrote while at University—available in Galassi's edition for the first time for many years—are sensitive and tender, yet at the same time sharply decisive. Their form is colloquial and simple compared with what he had written earlier and what most other poets were writing:

> "All last night we lay so close
> All completeness of the heart
> The restless future will efface:
> Tomorrow night we sleep apart."

It is clear how far he was from the crude idea that every poem must directly serve a political purpose. To write revolutionary poetry, he believed, the writer must be committed; but he never questioned the quality of, say, Graves' love poetry.

As our Might Lessens (1934-5),[7] the longest of the poems written during those years, is the personal statement of a serious mood among Communists. Here he confronts the bitterness of the defeat of the Left in Germany and the shock of the first reports of Nazi brutality, realising that for his generation the fight for socialism may well mean torture, shame and execution rather than the

[7] *UWUW*, p. 32.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

victorious barricades. Auschwitz and Belsen are foreshadowed here; the poem is a tensing of will and nerve for the ordeals ahead. The title and epigraph (taken from the Old English heroic poem of the Battle of Maldon) emphasise that this is a tragic historical moment of retreat, when desperate courage is needed and many will not live to see the revolution they fight for.

The poem opens with the victory of fascism in Europe, focusing on the perverted sexual-sadistic element in Nazism (linked with the ancient Roman imperial decadence), which crushes the natural sexual delight identified (as in Blake) with the forces of freedom and revolution:

> "For those whose tortured torturing flesh
> Stirred at the body under the lash,
> The painted boy in the practorian's bed.
> For those who were strong to live and love,
> Who claimed life had no need to starve,
> Camphor and pincers fouled urine and blood.
>
> "For all but suicides and slaves
> This death is background to our lives.
> This is the risk our freedom has us take.
> Some may die bold as Schulze died,
> Many will live to avenge our dead,
> But this fear haunts us all. Flesh still is weak."

Just after Hitler seized power, John had written:

> "It would be interesting to see how long one would remain a Communist inside a Nazi barracks. That's the final test. I feel already I could stand any other. That one I don't know about."
>
> (Spring 1933, *UW UW*, p. 168)

The whole poem is in a sense a meditation on this theme; its centre the polemic against idleness and brooding at a time which above all demands passionate concern and cool organised political action. Dreams and fantasies, whether interpreted in romantic or Freudian terms, will change nothing:

> "Not by any introspection
> Can we regain the name of action.
> Whatever dreams may mean to you, they mean sleep.
> Black over Europe falls the night,
> The darkness of our long retreat,
> And winter closes with a silent grip."

Individual heroism is not enough: the only hope lies with the revival of the revolutionary working-class movement:

> "But moving in the masses' blood,
> Vienna, Amsterdam, Madrid,
> The ten years sleeping image of the storm
> Shows us what we stand to gain
> If through this senseless-seeming pain,
> If through this hell we keep our nerve and pride.
> Where the nightmare faces grinned
> We, or our sons, shall wake to find
> A naked girl, the future at our side."

There's no easy optimism, though; it may be that only 'our sons', a later generation, will win through. For the present, it's an iron time.

Metaphors and properties in this poem are physical, bodily, with words evoking muscular strain and effort—grub, wince, grip, shutting fist, strips, breaking up. Yet the argument is also intellectual, the references precise and historical. Before critics deduce a morbid and disturbed psychology in the pervading contrasted images of sex and torture, they should remember what was actually done then in Germany or in occupied France to anti-fascist leaders (or what has been done since in Vietnam or Brazil, Chile or Spain). It was reasonable to be afraid, and through poetry to come to terms with that fear.

Out of Isolation

As our Might Lessens shows how wide of the mark it is to equate Cornford with Rupert Brooke. Far from idealising wars and armed struggle, he fully expects them to be filthy and degrading; merely in face of fascism there's no other way but to meet force with force. And in counterposing sexual fulfilment to violence and repression ('all strength moves in the dance of a woman's body') he finds the most direct language for his passionate hopes—a language perhaps too simple and direct for many other writers of the thirties to use.

It was out of the black and near-desperate moment symbolised in *As Our Might Lessens* that the international Communist movement came to realise the need for a change in its whole strategy and understanding of revolution. The Communist vanguard could not win on its own; the support of millions of workers' votes for Communism in Germany had not been enough. It was a matter of life and death for Communists to break out of their isolation (in part at least self-imposed) from other socialists and progressives, and to organise not just the industrial workers but the small middle class and intellectuals against fascism.

For Communist students this meant no longer seeing themselves as a small group of dedicated and exceptional revolutionaries crossing the battle-lines of class to ally themselves with the workers, but rather as leaders of the great majority of students and youth, whether or not they accepted the need for revolution. Concretely, for John, it meant working to unite the Communist and Labour student movements, reaching out to find

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

points of unity with Liberal and even some Conservative students.

The relatively short period from this change to the war—only four or five years in all—showed the vast potential of this kind of broad movement, the Socialist strategy that (as Eric Hobsbawm showed in the July *Marxism Today*) has most powerfully shaken the ruling class in Western Europe. In France and Spain it brought popular front governments to power; in Britain the great anti-Mosley demonstrations, the nation-wide solidarity with Spain, the rise of the *Left Book Club* to 60,000 members, the proliferation of left-wing theatre and writing. John Cornford didn't live to see much of this, and in retrospect it was all, of course, too little and too late to prevent world war. But it was to experience this vision in action that he went to Spain very soon after Franco's rebellion, because here at last the armed people were standing up to fascism. It's more than a 'liberal myth' (as Galassi calls it) that made him at the time of his death a symbol not just for Communists, but, as the dedication to the original memorial volume of his writings said, for 'all advanced and progressive mankind'.[8]

Spain

Full Moon at Tierz,[9] his most ambitious poem, was written while serving with the militia on the Aragon front in August/September 1936. Composing it in his head a stanza at a time while on guard duty at night, he scribbled down and revised the sections in his notebook; it was first printed in *Left Review* after his death.

Technically it's remarkable for its singing quality, the powerful rhythm which John associated with the working-class songs of Brecht and Eisler; and also for its strictness of form and the bareness and sharpness of imagery and language, behind which lie the lessons of Auden and Graves.[10] The regular stanza helped composition, and adds stress and precision to the tense speaking voice counterpointed against it.

A clear line of intellectual argument provides the structure, making it more like metaphysical poetry than like the Rupert Brooke 1914 sonnets with which Stansky and Abrahams rather ineptly compare it. Some critics, failing to grasp this central argument, have felt it ought to be a purely personal statement like *Heart of the heartless world*, and have seen the politics in it as intrusive propaganda rather than what it really is, 'belief compromised with his own individual observation'.

The opening sets the Spanish war in history as a crucial turning point (which indeed it proved to be). The forbidding mountains of Aragon all round fuse with the metaphor of historical process:

> "The past, a glacier, gripped the mountain wall,
> And time was inches, dark was all,
> But here it scales the end of the range,
> The dialectic's point of change
> Crashes in light and minutes to its fall."

Elsewhere John had written: 'I don't think of Communism as inevitable, like measles, or the war, or the present crisis, but as *necessary*. . . . It hasn't got to come; there's the alternative of gradually relapsing into an American anarchy as we are doing at present—also the prospect of another war.' The pattern of the future doesn't yet exist—only the line of fight now is clear. It's the opposite of the mechanical notion of Marxism as a kind of predestination:

> "The intersecting lines that cross both ways,
> Time future, has no image in space.

[8] *John Cornford, a Memoir*, edited by Pat Sloan, Cape, 1938.

[9] See *UWUW*, p. 38: or Skelton, *Poetry of the Thirties*, p. 137.

[10] As a boy Auden had advised him: 'You might do more with stricter forms . . . as the very nature of the form forces the mind to think rather than to recollect.' (Stansky and Abrahams, *Journey to the Frontier*, p. 173.)

WORLD MARXIST REVIEW: 1976
No. 10

PEACE AND PROBLEMS OF DISARMAMENT

THE MIDDLE STRATA AND THE POLICY OF ALLIANCES
by R. Mechini

HOW CMEA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS MONGOLIA
by Ts. Davadorzh

Price 25p plus postage
£3 for one year
FROM
CENTRAL BOOKS LIMITED
37 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8PS

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Crooked as the road that we must tread,
Straight as our bullets fly ahead.
We are the future. The last fight let us face."

Flesh and Blood

On guard in the moonlit fields, he muses on the meaning of the coming battles and nerves himself to overcome his own loneliness and fear. In reading the mood here it's helpful to know something of his own situation. Going to Spain on a press-card to see at first hand what looked like being a brief (because nation-wide) popular resistance to fascism, he had volunteered almost on impulse for the first militia willing to take him, and found himself fighting amongst anarchists and POUM supporters, many of them brave and sincere revolutionaries, but undisciplined, inefficient and led by a policy of 'second revolution' which seemed to him 'provocative and utterly dangerous'.[11]

Later at the front he'd fallen in with a group of German ex-Communists, whom personally he liked and admired, and who 'genuinely believe the CI has deserted the revolution'. The struggle was a test not only of his own strength, but of the ideas he had made his own and which had brought him to Spain. As a single Communist, isolated by political differences as well as language, a raw and frightened soldier on the eve of battle:

"Now with my Party, I stand quite alone."

Out of this isolation he wills strength and courage sufficient to the need:

"Then let my private battle with nerves
The fear of pain whose pain survives,
The love that tears me by the roots,
The loneliness that claws my guts
Fuse in the welded front our fight preserves."

Even some sympathetic critics, like Abrahams and Stansky, or Roy Fuller, have read the poem as 'sacrificing individuality and subtlety of language to slogans, quotations and snatches of song', suggesting that 'the whole reality is lost sight of in abstractions' because 'there was a political point to be made'. They miss the fact that the political differences on the left are part of his personal loneliness and pain. As he wrote in a letter around the same time:

"I am beginning to find out how much the Party and the International have become flesh and blood of me. Even when I can put forward no rational argument, I feel that to cut adrift from the Party is the beginning of political suicide."

The fundamental unity of the movement—beyond particular argument or loneliness—is expressed emotionally in music, the *International*, the *Bandiera Rossa*, sung on demonstrations or at student parties or in fascist gaols. That's why they are quoted here.

In the final section the poet's homesickness links this battle with what's going on in the world outside. Spain is not just a romantic foreign adventure, it's life or death for Britain. The lyrical language here is loaded with deeper meanings. Oranienburg was one of the Nazis' first torture-camps: 'freedom's crooked scars' the swastika carved on the bodies of comrades. 'Clydeside and the gutted pits of Wales' are the old red working-class districts, now gutted by depression and silent in the face of the fascist threat; it's from there that the militant workers will have to come to fight (as indeed they did) alongside the Spanish militia.

England is silent under the same moon
From Clydeside to the gutted pits of Wales.
The innocent mask conceals that soon
Here too our freedom's swaying in the scales.
Oh understand before too late
Freedom was never held without a fight.

Freedom is an easily spoken word,
But facts are stubborn things. Here too in Spain
Our fight's not won till the workers of all the world
Stand by our guard on Huesca's plain,
Swear that our dead fought not in vain,
Raise the red flag triumphantly
For Communism and for liberty.

The last lines proved not so much metaphorical as prophetic. Before many months were out, John had returned to Spain with a group of British volunteers he had recruited to join the first international units fighting round Madrid. In the song-book of the International Brigades the *Bandiera Rossa* (from which the final couplet is quoted) is bound up alongside the *Red Flag* and the *Himno de Riego*. Professor Tolley criticises the use of 'freedom' in these last stanzas as 'vague'; but it wouldn't have seemed so to anyone involved at the time in the anti-fascist movement. It was the freedom of working-class organisation that was threatened most of all.

A Letter from Aragon, John's last poem, is in my experience the one that speaks most directly to students today. Here indeed his belief is 'compromised by his observation' of the ugliness of war—the stinking unheroic corpse, the bombing

[11] The political comments are quoted from the impressive analysis of *The Situation in Catalonia* which he wrote for the British CP on his brief return to England. (*UWUW*, pp. 108-124.)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and panic, the wounded who are not too brave to moan and keep the sick poet awake. And the grim accuracy of this gives greater power to the affirmation at the end:

> But when I shook hands to leave, an Anarchist worker
> Said: Tell the workers of England
> This was a war not of our own making,
> We did not seek it.
> But if ever the Fascists again rule Barcelona,
> It will be as a heap of ruins with us workers beneath it.

The resolve to fight to a finish is now not something the Communists alone have decided—it is an idea that has 'gripped the masses' and become a material force. Subsequent history, from the fall of Barcelona in 1939 through the long years of illegal resistance until now, gives these words even greater weight.

Clive Branson

Clive Branson's poems are little known; he was primarily a painter and political worker. But his life and writings show how the revolutionary feeling continues long after the blows of the later thirties, after the Spanish defeat, after 1939.

Branson was the same age as MacNeice, came from an Army and public school background and studied painting at the Slade. By the time he was twenty-two he had read his way out of the attitudes and standards he had grown up with: he joined the Independent Labour Party and then, in 1932, the Communist Party. Like Cornford, he became engrossed in the practical activity of the movement—running a street paper, lecturing for the National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC), speaking on Clapham Common, and especially building up Marxist classes and factory groups among industrial workers in Battersea where he lived. Later he fought in the International Brigade and was a prisoner of war.

The experience and imaginative energy of these years is felt in the pictures he painted when he got back from Spain, small townscapes of Battersea streets and workers and scenes from the blitz. Mainly realistic in outline, they're lit with an intensity of colour that is not at all naturalistic, suggesting liveliness and potential for change in the drabbest urban landscape. The drawings he sent home from India (where he was killed on the Burma front in 1944) were published with some of his letters and poems in *British Soldier in India*, and convey searing anger at the poverty he saw there. His talent was in its way as outstanding as Cornford's, and had longer to mature.

A few of Branson's poems were printed in magazines like *Poetry and the People*, but since none are in the current anthologies I include three here in full. The first was written in 1938 in the Spanish prison where brigaders from many countries were held, including some from the Thaelmann battalion:

> *To the German Anti-Fascists in San Pedro*
> The evening went beyond the bars, passed by us,
> His face at the window
> His voice in a frame
> He 'who ought to be shot' and will be
> when the nazis get him home.
> He was singing
> this German prisoner, self-exiled workman,
> common songs of the beer-garden in his home town.
> Singing to memories of friends
> who could not hear.
> And others, some half dozen, sang too.
>
> I have lain in my blanket at night
> kept awake by lice and a dry itching skin
> looked at the blue window panes broken
> with a star up in one corner.
> Outside a night-bird intensely sings
> unseen and to no-one.
> Only to memories of friends did he sing?
> Only to the deaf ears of these ghosts?
> Was there meaning in his song, or meaningless
> Like that of the nightingale?
> Mere repetition of a few notes through centuries with no gain
> Just a song of the beer-garden?
> In the strains of music
> In the discipline of song
> This prisoner, the captive voice
> sang of the freedom in trees, of cloud and wind
> the movement of men on bicycles, hiking,
> of animals not afraid of leaving their cages
> who do not need the safety of their cell
> the security of a gaol.
>
> He sang the promise of a dream
> sometime come true, of free men
> whose homes are not prisons,
> beds not graves, play not in murder,
> work for creation.
>
> This German sang to us of home
> Our heritage in one another
> Comrade, Brother—no foreigner.[12]

It's an uneven poem perhaps, yet a very moving one, written as it is in the last year of the war when he could have had no illusions about easy victory. As well as any poem of the time, it suggests the solidarity and rational confidence that sustained comrades through those otherwise bloody years. Second, a small piece from Palencia concentration camp. It's no more than a couple

[12] Published in *Poetry and the People*, No. 11.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of images, a painter's poem:

In the Camp

The storm has cleared the air
but not barbed wire.
Here we can bask in the sun,
should our eyes have forgotten,
pointed at by the guard's bayonet.

We're like young trees set
on a wide landscape and mountain
in a picture for ever certain.
Clouds pass and fine weather
and with them the liberty we long for.

I don't know the date of the last poem, *Foreword*, which is much more cheerful. Let it speak for itself:

Because it's time for a revolution
To end the beating-up of man by man
To do away with the police nark, stool pigeon, assassin,
Judge, gaol;
Because in the common people
We have found something much more beautiful
Than king, God or individual;
That is bad reason
To blunt the nature of our fellow men,
Their will
To climb the steep hill, strip in the sun,
Walk along the river bank, watch the water fowl, to fish
Or sit lazily sucking the juicy end of rich grass,
To take one's girl on a pillion ride
Away from the town down to the sea side.
The writer who says he has no time to care
For the daffodil or cowslip shames
The very revolution he proclaims.
He is no better than the millionaire
Who clears the ground of trees, shrubs, weeds
To make his lawns monotonously green
Forbidden to all except the mowing machine.
Don't insult the bugger on the dole.
He loves the taste and smell of a good meal—
Sure!—but he loves as well
Fresh air, a salty breeze and brown earth still.
It is for these, the joy of being in a man,
That the factory hand is ready to risk all
Can take what's coming to him, and rebel.

It's impossible to separate poetry of this kind from the experience out of which it comes. 'The overtly political poetry of the period is too often theoretical', says Professor Tolley on the 385th and last page of his monumental commentary *Poetry of the Thirties*, 'and the overpowering feeling that a writer should be political or concerned with the issues of the day may often have diverted the true impulses of poetry'. But Clive Branson wrote this way because he lived and thought and saw the world this way, not because he thought it was correct to 'divert his true impulses' to write political poetry.

For some critics, the left-wing writer can't win. Either he is writing about what he doesn't know, and is therefore too theoretical and 'ideological'; or about what he does, in which case he is merely reflecting reality without transforming it into art. For the reader, living like the poet in difficult times, the commitment seems necessary and appropriate: less would have been less truthful.

We may agree with MacNeice that it's difficult for poets to write well from beliefs they haven't quite grown into, as he thought Auden, Spender and Day Lewis were sometimes doing in the thirties. But that, as he rightly saw, is not an argument against revolutionary poetry: only an argument for growth.

COMMENT

COMMENT is the Communist Party's fortnightly review. It carries analysis and lively discussion of the issues facing socialists today—in politics, economics and the arts.

Future articles include:

★ Who are the commodity speculators?

★ The Portuguese Communist Party's Congress.

★ French Communists and the army.

★ A plan for Britain's transport.

15p from Communist Party branches or bookshops, or subscriptions £5.30 a year, by writing to: Central Books, 37 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8PS.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Discussion Contributions on:

Socialist Democracy: Some Problems

George Bridges

The biggest single weakness in John Gollan's article is his underestimation of the ideological aspect of the Stalin era—the extent to which a distinctive set of political/theoretical ideas cohered into a system, which can legitimately be termed Stalinism.

It was not only Stalin's personal prestige which made Communists throughout the world accept what happened, but the fact that this ideology had become the universal outlook of the Communist movement. It shaped the psychology of a generation of Communists who took on trust the notion that yesterday's revolutionary heroes had become today's agents of fascism and deserved to be executed.

Stalinism Persists

It is partly this omission which made some people perplexed by Gollan's conclusion, because the way that the Stalin era is dealt with in the Soviet Union in fact has left the ideology which justified the crimes essentially intact. Far from having been 'rooted out' and 'exposed', it remains the dominant ideology of the Soviet leadership and helps to explain the continuance of deformations of socialist democracy and events such as the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Since 1956 the world communist movement has been characterised by a struggle between the effects of the persistence of Stalinism and those seeking to break with it. This is the significance of the current debates on strategy inside the communist movement. To bring about a renewal of creative Marxism and open up new roads of advance for the whole communist movement now demands an explicit break with Stalinism.

I want, by way of example, to focus here on a central aspect of Stalinist theory—the role of the Communist Party in the socialist political system—which lies today, in Brezhnev's words, at the 'pivot of struggle' in current controversies.[1]

[1] Speech to CPSU 24th Congress, 1971, *Moscow News*, 3.4.7., p. 23.

The Communist Party in Socialist Society

Stalin argued that the dictatorship of the proletariat necessarily involved the Communist Party wielding a monopoly of political power. It was, he said: "This special form of alliance [which] consists in that the leader in the state, the leader in the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat is *one* party, the party of the proletariat, the party of the Communists, which *does not and cannot share* that leadership with other parties."[2] Communist monopoly was a determining definitive criteria of socialism, which resulted from its class nature: ". . . a party is a part of a class, its most advanced part. Several parties, and consequently freedom for all parties, can exist only in a society in which there are antagonistic classes. . . ."[3]

The party could not substitute itself for the state or mass organisations, but these must function under party direction and 'guidance', i.e. must be denied autonomy on principle. The dictatorship of the proletariat, then, "consists of the directions given by the party, plus the carrying out of these directions by the mass organisations, plus their fulfilment by the general population."[4]

Thus the key political fact of the Soviet system was seen by Stalin as that "no important political or organisational problem is ever decided by the soviets and other mass organisations without directives from our party".[5]

So important was this seen that the 'leading role' of the CPSU was written into the 1936 'Stalin Constitution'.

Far from repudiating in any way this monolithic model, Khrushchev's main critique of Stalin was that he had departed from his own model by usurping the role of the leading party bodies and acting outside socialist legality. Current Soviet theory and practice show no qualitative break with the Stalin era on this question. The current constitution retains the clause on the party's 'leading'

[2] *Problems of Leninism*, Stalin, FLPH 1947, p. 133.

[3] *ibid.* p. 557.

[4] *ibid.* p. 142.

[5] *ibid.* p. 140.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

role. Communist Party power monopoly and 'guidance' of the whole of social development remain the determining characteristics of a socialist political system:

> ". . . The party is the leader and teacher of the mass organisations of the working people. It elaborates the correct political line, defines the tasks and direction of the practical work of all social institutions, co-ordinates their work, and strengthens them with leading personnel. Only the party, expressing the interests of all the people as their collective intelligence is capable of directing the work of the mass organisations and organs of power."[6]

This is not seen as a consequence of historical exigencies:

> "the Marxist Leninist party plays the leading role, not because its leaders wish it, but because the socialist society's development demands it. The communist party guidance is an objective need for the proletarian revolution. Its guidance of socialist and communist construction is an historical law."[7]

One Party and Multi-Party

It has been argued that the existence of more than one party in some socialist countries is an indication of a break with Stalinism. It is true that the political structure took different forms in different countries, but the Stalinist concept of the role of the party remained. It was over this issue that Yugoslavia was excommunicated and this lay behind many of the trials of the 1950s. It was explicitly argued that: ". . . we have never put forward the slogan of the national front as anything else but a front in which the working class, and the workers' party, is the guide, leader and chief. Any other way of comprehending the national front must be opportunist."[8]

The multi-party system is thus one form in which party monopoly of power is maintained. Sobelov argued: "one of the main conditions of the existence of a multi-party system in a socialist state is recognition of the leading role of the working class and its party, by any party which helps in governing the country."[9] In this variant, any party other than the CP merely fulfils the transmission belt function of the trade unions, youth movement, womens organisation, etc.

This is not, then, a principle which can be modified in particular conditions, but is seen as a law of social development. "The idea of a political opposition is incompatible with socialism. Not because Communists fear competition, as the adversaries of Marxism and Leninism maintain. The Communists are against the idea of establishing an opposition because it would not have a social base and would not be supported by any classes."[10] This is a direct descendant of Stalin's theory of 'one party—one class'.

Lack of Autonomy

This is not academic quibbling, but necessary to understand the process by which the deformations of democracy come about. Denial of autonomy to political forces functioning within socialist legality was the critical basis for the extent of Stalin's abuses. Without this autonomy, such as was developing in 1968 in Czechoslovakia, there can be no meaningful socialist democracy, nor checks on arbitrary rule. Democracy is not a matter of more or less 'liberalisation', of whether the party 'allows' more or less books to be published. Nor is it an issue of whether the party is skilful in gauging mass opinion, or encourages 'participation' in administering decisions taken by the party.

The lack of autonomy of non-party forces has serious consequences for the party itself. As Deutscher shows, if no extra-party opposition or debate is allowed, then it follows that neither can there be meaningful inner-party opposition or debate. Stalin understood this process well and used it to his factional advantage. If you allow freedom of opposition and criticism within the party, while denying it to external 'enemies of the party', then the 'enemies' simply appear *within* the party itself. There they may even reach leading positions (Bukharin, Trotsky, Slansky, Nagy, Dubcek, etc.). This, of course, is far more dangerous—the wolf in sheep's clothing. Thus you have the perfect rationale for the suppression of inner-party democracy, purging of dangerous elements and the especially harsh treatment of leading party 'dissenters'. Further, since the party may not be trusted, a political/ideological role must be allocated to the security organs to carry out surveillance over the party (and anyone else politically active). In extreme cases, the full military might of the socialist state, as in 1968, needs to be brought into play.

Far from this aspect of Stalinism being rejected, the current characterisations of differences in the world movement reproduce the 'penetration' model. Brezhnev refers to the "penetration into

[6] *Leninist Standards of Party Life*, Pronin and Stepichov, Progress Pubs, 1969, p. 129.

[7] *Socialism and Democracy*, Topornin and Machulski, Progress Pubs, 1974, p. 123.

[8] Bierut, quoted by Minc in *On People's Democracy*, CPGB, 1951, p. 10.

[9] *Marxism Today*, April, 1969.

[10] Topornin and Machulsky, *op cit*, p. 179.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the communist movement of revisionist influences" as an explanation of differences. In 1956, Khrushchev accused Beria of being an "agent of a foreign intelligence service" and thus 'justified' his summary execution. Imre Nagy, Hungarian Communist leader in 1956, was executed in secret in 1958 as an 'imperialist agent' and the Dubcek leadership of 1968 is characterised as 'counter-revolutionary'. An enhanced political/ideological role is reserved for the KGB. The 'rooting out' that Khrushchev initiated was to take the security organs out of the hands of Stalin and Beria personally and return them to 'guidance' of the Communist Party.

Monolithic View

Alongside a monolithic view of party power, and party unity, is the monolith of the popular will. The 1951 formulation "the people unanimously elect to the Soviets the candidates of the Stalin Communist and non-party bloc; the people unanimously vote for the policy of the CPSU(B)" was in essence reproduced by Brezhnev in 1969 at the World Communist Conference: "The Communist Party and its domestic and foreign policy have the wholehearted support of the entire Soviet people." This monolithic notion provides the ideological basis for viewing opposition/criticism/dissent, etc., as essentially pathological or externally generated.

While, of course, the changes since 1956 are not to be underestimated (the extent of repression, the return to a kind of legality[11]), the ideological justifications are basically the same.

New Possibilities

However, as Gollan rightly pointed out, the 20th Congress opened up the possibility of a break with these notions which is now finding concrete expression in the pluralistic programmes for democratic advance to socialism in a number of important Communist parties in the West. The persistence of the ideology of the Stalin era within the movement is an obstacle not just theoretically inhibiting the renewal of Marxism, but retarding the development of unity and Communist advance.

This problem has an historic precedent in the period up to 1935 where, at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, sectarianism was identified as a contributory factor in the isolation of the Communists and the rise of fascism. The historic significance of the 20th Congress is that it buried finally the damaging monolithic nature of the international movement and allowed the possibility for the break with sectarianism which we now need to take further. Gollan's article was a valuable step in this process.

[11] Although here too the notion of the autonomy of law is seen as "bourgeois" following Vyshinsky's 1936 theory of the "subordination of the formal commands of the law to those of party policy."

Reuben Falber

It is impossible to consider the problem of socialist democracy without reference to the phenomenal transformation which has been wrought in the Soviet Union in the space of less than two generations, the sacrifices which were made, the hardships undergone and the qualities of leadership required from, and provided, by the CPSU.

Mistakes were inevitable. That some should fall by the wayside was to be expected. This is not the same as saying all the decisions and developments were unavoidable or inevitable. However circumscribed by harsh realities, there were always choices. The mass repression, the physical destruction of outstanding Bolsheviks, and other crimes which disfigure so many of the years of Stalin's leadership, were not inevitable. Soviet society survived and developed not because of them, but despite them.

Problem of Dissent

Does the present level of Soviet society, its economic and social progress mean that there are now no problems on which opposing or dissident views and different solutions, are permissible?

Peter Hall (August) dismisses all dissidents as "a product of a past in which the individual was placed above society" and people who "seek to proclaim their own 'intellect' over the collective wisdom and power of the ordinary people." How this "collective wisdom" can be arrived at without discussion and controversy involving the clash of opposing views and ideas, he does not explain. For him, apparently, the last word has been said on the development of society, and those who disagree are only "mere shadows of the past".

John Tarver (July) expresses a similar view, claiming "while, in the growth of bourgeois democracy, the right to dissent was vital", under socialism "the term 'dissent' loses its meaning" and is now limited to people who "while not forming a distinct class or group . . . objectively or subjectively feel their personal interests do not coincide with the declared interests of society."

It is pertinent to ask how the "declared interests of society" are determined and adapted and changed

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the light of further development and experience. Even if the feelings of those who dissent are subjective, the fact that dissenting views are held by many and on a wide range of questions, is itself an objective factor requiring a study and analysis of the roots and causes of dissent in socialist society.

The dialectical laws of social development discovered by Marx do not cease to operate when contradictions arising from the existence of classes with irreconcilable interests have been ended. Non-antagonistic contradictions exist and arise from the actual process of the development of socialist society. It is questionable whether the monolithic picture of socialist society presented frequently by its opponents, and by some of its supporters, corresponds to actual reality. Governments and planners have to decide the proportions of available resources devoted to consumption and investment; how much should be available for personal consumption, wages and salaries; and how much for social consumption, education, social security, health, etc., the degree of centralised or decentralised direction of the economy. Is it not possible that these decisions can affect managers, technicians, industrial workers, intellectual workers and farmers in different ways and have differential effects upon the income of the separate groups?

The idea that different sections or strata, while having the same basic long-term interests, can come into conflict with each other at a given moment, must surely be strengthened by the experiences of Poland in recent years.

There may also be interests of a type other than economic. What bearing do changes in the educational system have on different strata? The environmental lobby in the Soviet Union has at times succeeded in effecting changes in industrial processes which are harmful to the environment. Do the managers and workers in the enterprises involved necessarily regard this as something which is in their own interests?

The range of contradictions and group interests within socialist society which require to be resolved could be extended. To say this is not to criticise socialism but to emphasise that socialist society too, develops in accordance with scientific laws.

Since development is a continuous process, then discussions of the problems too must be continuous with all who are involved being consulted and having the opportunity to express their interests and views. For the growth of socialist democracy the question is how are the discussions conducted and decisions taken.

They are discussed in the Party, and the decisions taken are binding on all members. Gollan's description of Party life in Lenin's time is one of open, vigorous hard-hitting polemics with sharp rebuttals of opposing points of view. Tarver prefers the 'iron discipline' and 'strict centralism' which has prevailed for several decades. But there is no conflict between democratic centralism and hard-hitting discussion. Communists voluntarily accept discipline; it is not something which can be imposed, it springs from conviction. The opportunity of correcting errors or securing a change of course through discussion would strengthen both conviction and discipline.

Participation in Decision-Making

Soviet citizens, the majority of whom are not Communists, are drawn into discussion on the fulfilment of plans and a variety of problems. These discussions appear to be conducted on the basis of accepting the primary assumptions of the policies and main lines decided by the Soviet Government and the Communist Party. There does not appear to be evidence of real opportunities of putting forward alternative views on how socialist society should develop, how the acute economic and social problems should be tackled, or the relations of the Socialist state with other states. Nor does the Soviet political system have clearly recognisable and defined means through which the whole of society can participate in decision making at all levels and through which relations between groups and interests can be settled.

It will no doubt be asserted the Soviet Constitution provides for this. But what happens in real life, how a society transacts its affairs, is perhaps more relevant. Soviet citizens have the right to demonstrate, but those who took advantage of that right to show their disapproval of the military intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 discovered to their cost the authorities had no difficulty in finding a legal argument for denying them this right. Anti-Semitism is a crime under the Soviet Constitution, but authors and publishers of anti-Semitic books and articles have gone unpunished. Strict adherence to all rights allowed in the Constitution would improve matters but the problem of establishing political methods appropriate to socialist society cannot be indefinitely ignored.

In view of the way in which Soviet society has developed over the past 59 years, it would be wrong to suggest that the answer to the problem there is the multi-party system, which many Western Communist Parties envisage in the period of the building of socialism in their countries. Socialist society would, however, benefit from the creation of political institutions which enable groups and individuals to express their views, win support for them and exercise pressure on the authorities. This is admittedly not a simple problem: the classic Marxist thinkers have provided little or no guidance on this question. There will need to be trial and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

error, but the Soviet political system is not finite, it must evolve as part of the total development of Soviet society.

Democracy in the CPGB

John Tarver's comments on the discussions in our own Party on the 20th Congress are nothing short of breath-taking. The exposure of the crimes of the Stalin era hit the Communist movement like a bombshell. Communists were faced with the difficult, painful and lengthy process of rethinking a number of cherished ideas. Facing up to the fact they had for years defended things which were indefensible, denied things which turned out to be true, and supported statements which proved to be untrue.

Whatever its merits, the June resolution of the CPSU did not answer the questions in the minds of many Communists. But, says Tarver, we 'tolerated' a meandering discussion with unofficial journals and meetings galore. To be precise, there was one unofficial journal whose publishers were subsequently suspended for taking the discussions outside the Party. The discussion was conducted with insufficient information and around a speech which was never officially published. Should the Executive Committee have clamped down on the discussion of problems which were troubling Communists? I shudder to think what would have happened to the Party had we acted as Tarver suggests.

I would not argue that there have not been weaknesses in the way the democratic processes have operated in our Party over the years. But the picture drawn by Ralph Russell (August) is a caricature of the position.

Political Committee members have full rights to express their own views at EC meetings and (as EC members will confirm) not infrequently differ from other PC members. The EC Minutes, which are circulated to the Districts, record votes when they are taken.

Nor is it the case that differences within the Political Committee are not brought before the EC, or that differences in the EC are concealed from Congress. I presume that Comrade Russell is not arguing minor differences on points of formulation should be dealt with in this way, but that he is referring to differences on major questions. He himself mentions the occasion upon which such a difference was brought to the Congress. The fact is that in recent years there has not been a major division on the EC. On such important questions as China and Czechoslovakia there have been differences within the Party. The Executive Committee gave members all the information it had. These matters were thrashed out in the columns of the *Morning Star* and *Comment*, in many meetings, and Congress decided the Party's position. Any EC members who differed from the position of the EC had the full right to put their views to Congress had they wished.

Open Discussion

Our Congresses compare more than favourably with other organisations of the Labour Movement. *Comment* publishes a lengthy discussion. Branch resolutions and amendments number well into four figures, and Congress debates and votes on all major issues on which there are differences of opinion. We have a problem of procedure arising from the growing number of branches which exercise their right to formulate resolutions and amendments. This is a healthy development; we have to solve the problem in a way which strengthens Party democracy and meets the legitimate demands being made by a number of Party organisations and members.

There has been a free, open and wide-ranging discussion in our press, meetings, schools and conferences on a large number of questions—socialist democracy, the International Communist Movement, new developments in the women's movement, ultra-leftism, inflation, the environment, etc. There will now be a long and thorough discussion of the new draft of *The British Road to Socialism*.

On the ETU ballot-rigging, Ralph Russell says "The Party leadership was either criminally ignorant or criminally implicated (in both cases I mean 'criminally' by Communist standards)." Mr. Justice Winn's judgment declared "There is no evidence from which the Court can infer that any Communist group ever decided that unlawful methods ought to be adopted." (*Daily Worker*, June 29, 1961)

John Saville and Edward Thompson were not suspended "because they would not desist from publishing discussion on questions beyond the limits which the leadership imposed", but because they took the discussion outside the Party in breach of its rules.

The report of the Commission on Inner Party Democracy and its adoption by the Special Congress in 1957 was a milestone in the development of democratic Party life. Few comrades whose membership of the Party and active participation pre-dates the 20th Congress will dispute the fact that there have been big changes for the better in Party procedure. We have not attained perfection, but we conduct our business openly, we discuss our policy and differences publicly for all to see, we make every endeavour within the limits of our resources to provide the Party members with the facts and information they require to take part in discussion, formulation of policy and activities.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bill Tait

The John Gollan article fails on two counts on which, it seems to me, such an undertaking must stand or fall.

(i) He ignores the question of how it was possible for the crimes and distortions associated with Stalin to take place and the relationship between subjective factors, such as Stalin's personal character and objective factors, such as the rise of Hitler to power in Germany and the rising danger of war, to be seen even before 1933.

(ii) He does not attempt to explain how it was possible, in his own words, "that the basic socialist foundations of the Soviet Union were unshaken, despite the crimes in the period of Stalin's leadership".

Yet these are key issues for an understanding of what happened in the Soviet Union and everyone must work out answers to these questions for himself or herself.

There is also the difficult problem of reaching a balanced judgment on Stalin—he unquestionably made a contribution and, equally unquestionably, did great harm.

One may have reservations about the June 1956 resolution of the CPSU central committee, but it deals with these issues more adequately than John Gollan does. At least it does not evade them.

When Did it Start?

Nor are his arguments easy to follow.

There will be little disagreement with his view that things had, indeed, gone badly wrong by the time of the 17th Congress in 1934. But when did they start to go wrong? And to what degree? When did it go over from an autocratic attitude on the part of Stalin—and Lenin himself is a witness that Stalin was always inclined to be a heavy-handed autocrat—to distortion of socialist legality? For that matter, quite a few communist leaders have had autocratic tendencies without being guilty of crimes.

John Gollan does not give a direct answer, but says nothing specific to contradict the view that it was around 1933—a signficant date.

However, referring to the 16th Congress in 1930, he asks: "Do we see here the beginning of the subsequent problems?"

But he also suggests earlier dates, and even immediately after Lenin's death. Here I find his argument strained.

He acknowledges that only one party remained legal at the time of the Civil War "because the opposition parties were not prepared to remain within legal limits", and that Lenin accepted that his concept of peaceful development had been thwarted by events.

But John Gollan seems to imply that the parties which had fought against the Bolsheviks in the Civil War, and had been outlawed by the government headed by Lenin, should have been reinstated after Lenin's death.

Monolithic?

I find his argument about 'factionalism' ambiguous. And it seems to me that he tries to make too much out of the term 'monolithic'.

He accepts that organised factionalism was banned by the 10th Congress in 1921, actually on Lenin's proposal, because of dangers arising from clashes between Lenin and "Trotsky, Bukharin and others" and from "threatening new military intervention". But he objects to Stalin's statement that "Leninism teaches that the proletarian party must be united and monolithic, that it must not have any factions or factional centres, that it must have a single party centre and a single will".

Surely in this context 'monolithic' means no more than the absence of factions—which is the sense in which the word is used in the Soviet Union today.

One could go on, point by point. I was left with the strong feeling that there was an unexpressed motive behind John Gollan's article—to justify certain positions on current issues. This applies just as much to the references to the period after 1956.

John Gollan pays a final tribute to "the heroic people of the Soviet Union. . . . It is to their everlasting credit and to the credit of their party, the CPSU, that they had the will and the strength boldly to expose and root out these deformations."

Unfortunately, this is not the overall impression which the article appears to intend to leave in the mind.

Please post "Marxism Today" to me every month.
I enclose: £4.15 for one year UK and Eire
£4.27 for one year Abroad
(*Delete the line which does not apply*)

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Post with remittance to: CENTRAL BOOKS LTD.
37 Gray's Inn Road, London, WC1X 8PS

Published by the Communist Party, 16 King Street, London, WC2E 8HY, and printed by Farleigh Press Ltd.(T.U.),Watford, Herts— 26606

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

UNDER-CONSUMPTION THEORIES

MICHAEL BLEANEY

A history and criticism of theories about the causes and cure of capitalist crises.

paperback £3

TOWARDS STANDARDS of CRITICISM

F. R. LEAVIS

Reprint of a volume of articles and reviews which paved the way for the critical journal *Scrutiny*—with a new Introduction in which Dr. Leavis settles accounts with the critical standards of today.

paperback £2.75

LAWRENCE & WISHART
46 BEDFORD ROW
LONDON WCIR 4LR

Collet's

LONDON BOOKSHOP
64-66 Charing Cross Road,
London WC2H 0BD
Tel: 01-836-6306

BOOK BARGAINS

THE HAUNTED FIFTIES—*I. F. Stone*
NOW ONLY 50p

LABOUR CONDITIONS UNDER CAPITALISM—*Kuczynski*
Vol. I ONLY 90p
Vol. II ONLY £1.05

THE UNSTABLE ECONOMY—*Perlo*
NOW ONLY 60p

LENIN—*Rolf Theen* ONLY 90p

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF D. N. PRITT—BRASSHATS AND BUREAUCRATS ONLY 50p

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MAGAZINES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AVAILABLE FROM THE USSR ON SUBSCRIPTION

(Copies on subscription are sent direct from Moscow to the Subscriber; *E. & R.* indicates a subscription for the parallel English and Russian editions, useful for students of the Russian language.)

SOVIET UNION—Monthly

One year	£1.50
Two years	£2.25
E. & R. one year	£2.25

SOVIET WOMAN—Monthly

One year	£1.50
Two years	£2.25
E. & R. one year	£2.25

MOSCOW NEWS—Weekly

One year	£4.00
Two years	£6.00

(No Russian edition)

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS—Monthly

One year	£2.00
Two years	£3.00
E. & R. one year	£3.00

NEW TIMES—Weekly

One year	£4.00
Two years	£6.00
E. & R. one year	£6.00

SPUTNIK—Monthly

One year	£3.00
Two years	£4.50
E. & R. one year	£4.50

FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS—Quarterly

One year	£2.70
Two years	£4.05
E. & R. one year	£4.05

SOCIALISM: THEORY AND PRACTICE—Monthly

One year	£2.10
Two years	£3.50

(No Russian edition)

SOCIAL SCIENCES—Quarterly

One year	£2.70
Two years	£4.05

(No Russian edition)

ASIA AND AFRICA TODAY—Bi-monthly

One year	£1.50
Two years	£2.25

(No Russian edition)

These subscriptions may be obtained by sending your order, with your remittance for the amount indicated, to:

CENTRAL BOOKS LTD.
37 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1X 8PS

AUTUMN TO SPRING PROGRAMME OF MARXIST EDUCATION CLASSES

All on Thursdays at 7.30 p.m.
Registration Fee 10p each class

Sept. 23 and 30, Oct. 7
BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MARXISM

Oct. 21 and 28, Nov. 4
MARXISM AND SCIENCE

Nov. 25, Dec. 2 and 9
MARXIST PRINCIPLES OF PHILOSOPHY

1977

Feb. 3, 10 and 17
A MARXIST VIEW OF HISTORY

March 24 and 31, April 7
MARXIAN ECONOMICS

May 5, 12 and 19
THE SCIENCE OF SOCIOLOGY

PROGRAMME OF MONTHLY LECTURES

All on Fridays at 7.30 p.m.
Admission free—collection

Oct. 1
"MARX AND ENGELS—an Intellectual Partnership." Lecturer: Dr. David McLellan

Nov. 5
"SCIENCE IN A SOCIAL CONTEXT—Today and in the future." Lecturer: Prof. Eric Burhop

Nov. 26
"WHAT IS MARXISM?" Lecturer: Jack Cohen

1977

Jan. 28
"FORERUNNERS OF SOCIALIST THOUGHT IN CROMWELL'S DAY." Lecturer: Christopher Hill

April 1
"THE WEBBS AND SOVIET COMMUNISM."
Lecturer: Prof. Roydon Harrison

May 13
A LECTURE ON THE STATE (title to be announced). Lecturer: Prof. Ralph Milliband

---

For free brochure of classes and lectures please send s.a.e. to:

THE SECRETARY
MARX MEMORIAL LIBRARY
37a CLERKENWELL GREEN
LONDON EC1R ODU

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED